DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 446 JC 920 109

TITLE	Teaching for Development: A Handbook for Instructors. 1992 Edition.
INSTITUTION	Community Coll. of Vermont, Waterbury.
PUB DATE	92
NOTE	70p.; For earlier edition, see ED 322 943.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Students; Class Activities; *Classroom Techniques; Cognitive Style; College Faculty; Community Colleges; *Course Organization; Faculty Development; Faculty Handbooks; Institutional Mission; *Instructional Development; Instructional Effectiveness; Instructional Improvement; Instructional Materials; Learning Strategies; *Learning Theories; Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Community College of Vermont

ABSTRACT

Developed as a resource for faculty members at the Community College of Vermont (CCV), this four-part handbook provides information about the CCV and presents ideas and strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching. Part I reviews the history of the CCV; examines the institution's mission, goals, and programs; profiles the CCV's teachers and students; discusses the role and availability of support staff; and provides a list of answers to commonly asked questions. Part II presents a selection of theoretical perspectives on successful approaches to teaching adults, including a discussion of the teacher's role and the goals of teaching; an overview of adult learning theory; and an outline of the Kolb approach to understanding student learning styles. Part III provides information about course planning, including a discussion of approaches to developing learning objectives, planning teaching methods and learning activities, identifying appropriate classroom assessment and evaluation strategies and criteria, conducting a final evaluation, determining course completion requirements, selecting textbooks, and utilizing special resources from the library services. The final part of the handbook provides detailed suggestions for making classes more lively and productive, including ideas for delivering effective lectures; leading discussions; using small groups; implementing experiential learning exercises; making use of assignments, quizzes, and audiovisual tools; writing effective evaluations; and dealing with quiet students, diversity and equity issues, and serious student learning problems. A list of 21 references are included. (PAA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED341446

TEACHING FOR DEVELOPMENT:

A HANDBOOK FOR INSTRUCTORS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Murphy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CCV

Community College of Vermont
Waterbury, Vermont

1992 Edition

JC920 109

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Community College of Vermont is committed to equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, age, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or mental handicaps. CCV does not discriminate on these bases in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its programs and activiteis. The following CCV staff member has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies of the College: Bette Matkowski, Affirmative Action Officer, Wasson Hall, P. O. Box 120, Waterbury, VT 05676; (802) 241-3535. In quiries concerning the application of nondiscrimination policies may also be referred to the Regional Director, Office for Civil Rights, U. S. Department of Education, J. W. McCormack P.O.C.H., Room 222, Boston Massachusetts 02190-4557.

TEACHING FOR DEVELOPMENT

A HANDBOOK FOR INSTRUCTORS

1992 Edition

Community College of Vermont
Waterbury, Vermont

INTRODUCTION

This handbook has several aims. One is to acquaint new instructors with CCV and its workings. Another is to offer all instructors—old, new, and otherwise—some thoughts and tips to enhance their teaching experience. It contains a mix of information on the theory and practice of teaching and learning.

We hope this manual will be a useful tool that makes your teaching life better. We have provided a "How to Use This Handbook" section which includes descriptions of what you'll find in each part of the handbook. This handbook can only skim the surface of most topics, but it may whet your appetite to learn more. If it does that, we will be delighted.

The college has lots of supplementary materials to take you deeper into matters of special interest. You can select from instructor bulletins on a variety of topics and, in CCV site libraries, you can find a good general collection of literature on adult learners and other teaching-learning topics. CCV's professional staff members are always available to discuss your teaching or any other aspect of your course. We encourage you to attend the informative orientation sessions held at the beginning of each semester, the all-college teacher conferences, and the instructor workshops offered during the semester. We hope that this handbook, combined with the other resources and services available to you, will assist in making your CCV teaching experience pleasant and productive.

The ideas and materials for this handbook were drawn from CCV staff and instructors as well as from selected literature on development and on teaching and learning in college. Beyond that, many CCV staff have contributed important recommendations and suggestions for improvements as succeeding drafts were completed. There are far too many to list here. I especially want to thank, however, Bette Matkowski, Dianne Maccario, Tim Donovan, Dian Ulner, and Dona Welch for their invaluable editorial, proofreading, and desktop publishing assistance.

G. Richard Eisele
Director of Academic Support Services

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This guide has four sections and an appendix. The sections are arranged sequentially according to the natural progression of a semester. And, while we hope that you will read the complete handbook, each part is written so that you may refer to it as specific needs for different kinds of information arise. You can use Part I and Part II for background information, Part III for specific course planning suggestions, and Part IV as a ready reference during the semester to enhance the teaching and learning in your classroom. Here is an overview of what each part contains.

Pages

Part I — THE CCV STORY 1-9

This section provides a brief look at CCV from its beginnings as a unique experiment in higher education to its present status as an established and highly successful nontraditional college. Part I touches on CCV's history, mission, philosophy, and degree program. It also provides a snapshot of its instructors, students, and staff. The section ends with answers to some questions frequently asked by instructors.

Part II — SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING 11-26

Part II presents, in a nutshell, a few of the theoretical perspectives that form the basis for many successful approaches to teaching adults. This section progresses from a discussion of teacher roles and goals to a brief overview of adult learning theory. It also discusses ways that instructors can facilitate student development and outlines a specific approach to understanding learning style.

Part III — AN OUNCE OF PREPARATION... 27-38

This part of the handbook is about planning your course. Using the CCV Course Description as a framework, it begins with a discussion of learning objectives and how to develop them. Other topics include planning the best learning activities and using teaching methods that accomplish your objectives. This section also discusses how to plan classroom assessment techniques and evaluation strategies, determine completion requirements, and select special resources to enhance your course through our library services.

Part IV — THE HEART OF THE MATTER: TEACHING YOUR COURSE 39-62

This is the teaching-tip section of the handbook. It provides suggestions and ideas for making your classes lively and productive from the first night of class to the end of the course. There are tips for delivering effective lectures, leading discussions, using small groups, and for trying various experiential learning exercises. This part of the handbook is where you would look for ideas on how to make the best use of assignments, quizzes, other assessment strategies, and audiovisual methods of instruction. You will also find a miscellany of other topics that range from dealing with students to coping with the diversity that you will surely find in your classes.

REFERENCES 63-64

Table of Contents

Part I THE CCV STORY 1

The History 1
A Mission Impossible Made Possible 2
Self-Reliance: A Goal for Adult Learners 2
A Degree Program to Fit Our Philosophy and Mission 3
Who Teaches at CCV? . . . And Why? 5
The CCV Student 5
The Local CCV Operation: Staff Members and What They Can Do For Instructors 6
Just Ask: Some Common Questions and Their Answers 7

Part II SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING 11

Getting Off On The Right Foot 11
Roles and Goals: Thinking About Yourself as an Instructor 12
Playing A Variety of Roles 12
Identifying Your Teaching Goals 13
Thinking about the Student as an Adult 14
Thinking About Development as a Lifelong Process 16
Adults Change in Other Ways Too 18
A New Perspective on Adult Development 20
What Can Instructors Do to Stimulate Development? 21
And Then There's the Matter of Style 22
The Kolb Model 23

Part III AN OUNCE OF PREPARATION... 27

The CCV Course Description 27
Developing the Course Objectives 28

Planning Your Teaching Methods and Learning Activities 30
Assessment/Evaluation Strategies and Criteria 31
Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) 31
Final Evaluation 34
Determining Course Requirements 35
Textbooks and Other Resources 35
Library Services 36

Part IV THE HEART OF THE MATTER: TEACHING YOUR COURSE . 39
The First Night of Class 39
Staying on Course 41
Methods That Work 42
The Lecture 43
Discussion 44
Connected Classes 47
The Magic of Small Groups 47
Role-Playing, and Other Experiential Methods 48
Audiovisual Instructional Methods 49
Etc., etc., etc. 50
Assignments That Work 51
Testing and Measuring 52
A Miscellany of Topics for Teachers 54
Addressing the Needs of All Students 54
Quiet Students 55
Student Diversity 55
Serious Student Learning Problems 56
The Interpersonal Element 57
Equity Issues in the Classroom 58
The Ending: Wrapping It Up in Style 59
Writing Evaluations 60
A Few Afterthoughts 61

References 63

Part I

THE CCV STORY

In the past 20 years CCV has grown from an idea in a study commission to an experimental college to an established institution. We now operate statewide, serving over 4,000 students each semester.

The History

Our history has sometimes been checkered, sometimes heroic, and always interesting. Having no campus, we have been called "the invisible college." Serving mainly adults in their own communities, we have been called "the movable feast." Offering classes in over 40 communities, we are truly a community college.

What have been the milestones in this trek?

- 1968: Governor Hoff's study commission finds a variety of needs for postsecondary education among working adults who could only attend college part-time and then mainly in the evenings. Building a campus or expanding an existing one was obviously no answer. Ergo, create a flexible community college system that makes deliveries—stages courses where people are. Another vote for Yankee ingenuity!
- 1970: Governor Davis creates the Vermont Regional Community College Commission (VRCCC).
- In the 1970-71 school year a handful of people in a cramped office in Montpelier launched the experiment with a menu of ten courses.
- 1972: The VRCCC is renamed The Community College of Vermont and becomes part of the Vermont State Colleges system.

- 1975: CCV gains accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Enrollment reaches 1,500.
- 1979: Statehouse budget-cutting noises suggest that CCV should be eliminated, but wide public support and good sense prevail.
- 1980s - 90s: CCV expands to one central and twelve site offices; academic quality gets strong emphasis; library system is established; enrollment climbs dramatically into the 4,000 student range; new programs with business and industry are initiated, and the college incorporates advanced technology to improve its operations.

Nice, you say, that all our graphs show that marvelous upward trend, but what about the mission, the philosophy, the quality of CCV's program?

A Mission Impossible Made Possible

Our mission is to make quality higher education available in communities throughout the state. We especially want to reach Vermonters who have time or money problems, family obligations, shaky self-confidence, or other barriers to gaining further education. CCV turns this commitment into action by using a statewide network of site offices. Each office draws upon the local community for classroom space, instructors, and good will. CCV is a two-year, open admissions institution providing occupational, degree, and transfer opportunities. Equality of access to a quality education is our goal.

CCV is also concerned about the economic vitality of the state. In addition to regular college courses, training sessions and workshops are targeted at the needs of businesses, associations, and state agencies.

What thinking lies behind the work of a nontraditional college that serves nontraditional students?

Self-Reliance: A Goal for Adult Learners

We believe that it's important to help students become self-reliant people who know **how** to learn. The self-reliant can assess what they have already learned and determine what additional learning is needed to reach their goals. They can plan how to get the learning, implement the plan and evaluate the results in terms of any adjustments, additional needs, or modification of goals.

To enhance the development of student self-reliance, CCV attempts to provide learning experiences that are balanced between the needs of the learner and the requirements of the college, between subject matter content and academic "process" skills, and between the theoretical and the practical. Ideally, students should get the sense of a discipline so they know its modes of inquiry, the sense of a subject so they know what

they know and don't know. After all, most adults are highly motivated and want to grapple with the material, even if they grumble periodically along the way.

A Degree Program to Fit Our Philosophy and Mission

At the degree program level, CCV develops student self-reliance through an individualized approach. Each student writes a plan that begins by outlining career, educational, and personal goals. The learning that is selected to fulfill those goals and other college requirements may come from CCV courses, credits transferred from other colleges, or even credits earned from noncollegiate experiences. Some of that learning will address an area of concentration such as Management, Human Services, Accounting, or Liberal Studies.

Five broad areas of competence replace the "two-from-column-A, three-from-column-B" approach to distribution requirements found at most colleges. Students must select learning experiences that will develop competence in the **Academic Skills** of reading, writing, speaking and listening, research, critical thinking, and mathematics.

Students must develop these skills beyond the basic entry level and fine-tune them to deal with a wide variety of college courses. English Composition, math courses, literature courses, speaking courses, etc. are common ways to develop these skills. However, many of these skills can be gained and applied in almost any course we offer. In fact, we encourage all instructors to examine their own subjects to see where academic skills can be developed. Can students prepare and give presentations? Can they do library or other types of research? Can they learn problem-solving or critical thinking skills? Can they read journal articles, or write about a special topic, or both? If the opportunity is there, it is a good way to make a connection between your course and the degree program. And, if possible, add an objective or two dealing with academic skills to your course description. Our degree students will appreciate it.

Degree plans also must be designed to include learning that will develop an understanding of four other areas of competence.

Understanding Society and the Individual - The college encourages students to develop competence in this area by learning about individual behavior, group dynamics and the processes of human development. Students can study how societies are formed, and, most importantly, learn about the relationship between the individual and society—one of the more fundamental and enduring aspects of the human condition.

In this area, students may also develop helping skills, counseling skills, and the skills that contribute to positive group dynamics. While psychology, human services, and sociology courses typically contribute to this competence, pertinent knowledge and skill can be gained in many other areas of the curriculum. What about in your course?

Cultural and Historical Awareness - Obviously, students most often develop this competence through history and cultural studies courses. However, many other courses

can contribute to this area as well. The college expects that students will learn history as an account of the past that is created by people who study its artifacts, documents, personal recollections of events, and other historians' attempts to do the same thing. Students can learn about culture as a system of symbols, ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, and other shared meanings that can unite diverse individuals into a society, tribe, or nation.

We ask students to incorporate courses in their plan that will give them an understanding of history and culture and how the two are integrated and interrelated. Just as importantly, they learn to understand and use some of the same tools and methods that historians, anthropologists, and others use to study history and culture.

Scientific and Technological Understanding - In today's rapidly changing and increasingly high-tech world, it is critical to develop some basic understanding and skills in this area. Computer courses continue to be popular and we are expanding our science offerings. To address this competence we ask that students learn to see science as a systematic and organized way of viewing and interpreting the natural world, and understand that technology deals with the tools and techniques required to harness and, in some instances, manipulate the natural world. Students also learn about the "scientific method" and how to apply it to problems. They must recognize that science and technology have limitations as well as tremendous potential to advance human welfare. Are there ways that your course can contribute to this competence?

Aesthetic Awareness - As you probably know, this is a tough area to define. Most would argue that each individual has a right to follow her/his own tastes and preferences about what is beautiful and what is not. However, the college believes that aesthetic awareness is an important outcome of a good education and that a sense of beauty, human nature, and the arts can be developed to enrich a person's life beyond what may come naturally. We ask our students to appreciate that standards and debates about beauty have evolved throughout history and that there are qualities that make some art, music, or literature of lasting value as opposed to what is temporarily popular or faddish. In any event, you might think about your own subject in the light of its potential to promote aesthetic awareness.

* * * * *

An important aspect of the degree program, and where CCV requirements are especially tough, is that the student, before graduating, must write an essay that demonstrates an understanding of how the different types and areas of learning fit coherently together.

It would be much simpler if there was only one right way to self-reliance, and we knew it, but .....

Who Teaches at CCV? . . . and Why?

- Mary has an M.Ed. from Harvard University and has been working in the public school system. She recently stopped teaching to spend more time with her young children. Mary is now an instructor at CCV in Early Childhood Education. This keeps her in touch with the profession and allows her to stay in contact with students and contribute to the teaching/learning process.

- Phillip recently moved to Vermont after living and working in the Washington, D.C. area. He has an M.A. from the University of Virginia where his father teaches computer science. Phillip has a long-term involvement with computers and has combined this interest with extensive knowledge about automation to start a career in this field. He specializes in spreadsheet software. As far back as he can remember, Phillip has thought about teaching. He applied for an instructor position with CCV and is now teaching a popular spreadsheet course.

- Susan is a math teacher at the local high school. She has a master's degree in that field from the University of Massachusetts. Every semester for the past 10 years, she has also taught algebra courses at CCV. Susan finds working with adult learners quite different from teaching high school.

Each year about 500 instructors teach for CCV statewide. These are people who live in the local community and whose lives are as diverse and busy as those of their students. They have both academic credentials and practical experience. More than 70% hold master's degrees and about 7% hold Ph.D's or law degrees.

Of course, there are nearly as many reasons for teaching as there are instructors. The classes are small; the atmosphere is challenging and supportive. Teaching for CCV is a good way to reground yourself in the fundamentals of your discipline and sharpen your skills. Most importantly, you can make a significant difference in the lives of students. The pay is modest but, as one St. Johnsbury instructor says, "It pays for my wood pile and our yearly trek to Montreal." Most CCV part-timers, however, talk about the satisfaction they get from helping people better themselves. Some instructors will even admit, in private, that they love being in the spotlight once a week.

The CCV Student

- Jacqueline always loved school and deeply regretted having to drop out a few weeks after beginning the 11th grade. Pregnant girls didn't attend high school then. She was also under parental pressure to get married as soon as possible. Now, twelve years, four kids, and a broken marriage later, she is trying to glue the pieces back

together with the help of an education. In spite of a strong fear of classroom participation, doubts about her own abilities, and some serious child-care and transportation problems, she is determined to make it work.

- Stephen knocked around through his 20's and even did a one-year stint in college. He never considered why he was in college nor did he know what really interested him. To make ends meet, he drifted from one low-paying job to another. In the last two years, Stephen worked as a manager trainee at a fast food franchise and as a used car salesman. He finally said to himself "My ship is sailing along and its time for me to start acting like the captain." Stephen's present goal is to get an associate degree in accounting. He figures that there is always demand for people trained in this field and while he doesn't expect to get rich, he hopes for some financial security down the road.
- Gwen is a department supervisor at a local insurance company. She takes a course almost every semester. She says, "I took my first CCV class to fill up my otherwise dull Tuesday evenings. Now I'm hooked; my brain has become dependent on a weekly fix of academia."

Are Jacqueline, Stephen, and Gwen the typical CCV students? Not really. Our students are diverse and difficult to generalize about. We serve many single parents as well as people like Stephen who are going through life transitions, but we also serve business people, social agency workers, other professionals, recent high school graduates, and people who already have college degrees. Sometimes the only common element seems to be their desire to use education as a tool for reaching their goals.

A quick glance at our students shows that:

- About three-quarters of them are women.
- More than half are over the age of 25.
- Most have completed high school or a G.E.D.
- More than three-fourths are currently employed.

The Local CCV Operation: Staff Members and What They Can Do For Instructors

Each CCV site office has a core academic and office staff. Visit your local office regularly and get to know the people who develop and support the business of education at CCV.

At each site, there are two types of coordinators: Coordinators of Instruction and Advisement (CIAs) and Coordinators of Student Support Services (CSSSs).

Coordinators of Instruction and Advisement are primarily responsible for the development and delivery of the academic program within the geographic region of that office. More specifically, the CIAs recruit instructors (finding you was part of the intelligence work that these coordinators actually do), orient them to the college, assist in course planning, and aid in locating instructional resources. They consult with instructors about individual students or about general classroom issues. They also arrange meetings and workshops for instructors and provide information on the teaching/learning environment.

Coordinators of Student Support Services are another critical element in CCV's approach to academic staffing. They have some of the same tasks as CIAs and some different ones too. CSSSs generally recruit instructors for basic level and developmental courses and aid these instructors in developing course plans, in locating resources, and in meeting individual student and group needs. They develop, with CIAs, student and instructor workshops; and they are available to come to your class (in any content area) to do short workshops on reading, writing, research skills, or career exploration, to name a few. CSSSs may be able to advise, assist, find a tutor, or develop special programs for any of your students who may need extra help making the grade in your course. These coordinators also provide student referral services. *Dimensions of Learning*, a course that is specifically designed to help students make the transition to college and persist once they get there, is designed and often taught by CSSSs.

The **Site Office Manager** (SOM) takes care of the administrative functions of the site office. She will make sure, among other things, that your teacher materials are disseminated, your copying gets done, and your evaluation materials get delivered. Much of that material will be produced by a **Secretary Receptionist** who may also help the SOM schedule classes, arrange for audiovisual equipment, order textbooks, and perform other tasks designed to make your teaching experience a little easier.

Some site offices also have the services of a **Financial Aid Coordinator** and most offices are assisted by a part-time **Work Study Student**.

And, behind the scenes, a centrally located **Academic Services Staff** provides assistance to coordinators, instructors, and students. These people develop publications like this one, support the work of all-college committees, provide in-service training for staff, develop special courses and materials, provide library services, and deliver special workshops for staff, instructors, and students.

Just Ask: Some Common Questions and Their Answers

- **Why does CCV need attendance sheets?** For three reasons. First, we want to follow the progress of your course so that we know about any problems in time to assist in solving them. Second, we must submit attendance information on veterans to the

V.A. Third, we are required to monitor the attendance of students receiving financial aid.

- **The course description seems to be another important document, what is so special about it?** The course description provides a framework for planning all learning activities. The course objectives are at the heart of the description. These objectives try to clearly and precisely describe what the students will know and be able to do upon successful completion. Some courses have standardized "essential objectives" developed by the college.

- **What are essential objectives and why do you have them?** CCV runs many of its courses in all regions of the state. By developing essential objectives (standardized, minimal expectations for learning) for these courses, we can ensure that a course taught in Newport will provide essentially the same content as the same course does when taught in Bennington. These objectives were carefully developed with the help of staff, instructors, and consultants. They must be used verbatim but other objectives can be added if an individual instructor or her/his students have special needs.

- **What about these narrative evaluations everyone talks about? I hear that they are a lot of work to complete.** It's true, we do require narrative evaluations and they do take some time to do well. However, the task can be eased by beginning with clear objectives and by monitoring student progress periodically throughout the semester. The results can be very informative for the students (they also do their own narratives) and for you. You will find further discussion of this topic later in the handbook.

- **What about letter grades?** Besides the narrative, the college uses two letter grades — **S** for satisfactory performance and **N** for unsatisfactory performance—based on the course objectives. If you have students who request traditional grades A, B, or C (any grade less than C is an automatic N), you may honor their request under the following conditions: that the request is made prior to the third class meeting, that you approve the request, that you provide the student with explicit criteria that are tied to the course objectives (see the Appendix for sample criteria), and that the student is informed that the decision to award a letter grade cannot be reversed once granted. The narrative evaluation is required regardless of the letter grade format selected.

- **I use journal articles, quizzes, and other handouts in my class. How do I get copies?** There is a photocopier in each office and the college will gladly provide copies. Please give the local staff at least 3 days advance notice. If your class requires large amounts of copying, the students will be charged a materials fee. Check with your coordinator about whether copyright restrictions apply.

- **There's bad weather.....I'm sick.... My babysitter is sick....My car is sick.... Who cancels my class and how are the students notified?** It is your responsibility to cancel a class for any reason. You will set up a telephone "chain" the first night of class so that students can help with the cancellation. You will find a special phone-chain form in your teacher materials. Please contact the local office and inform them of any class cancellation.
- **My class will be meeting in the high school. Are there any housekeeping rules?** This is one of the items that information in your teacher materials will fully explain. As a general rule, always leave your classroom in at least as good shape as you found it. And, please adhere to any no-smoking or other rules particular to that setting.
- **If I need to select a videotape or two and some journal articles to enhance my course, how do I find them?** CCV has a library service. It is designed to meet the needs of instructors and students working in a non-campus environment. Instructors can use this service in several different ways. You may find resources by calling our toll-free reference service number (800) 431-0025, or by leafing through our media catalog which lists all of the audiovisual materials owned by the college.
- **From what I hear, my students may have a wide range of skill levels in writing and other areas. Can those who need it get extra help someplace?** Yes, we have writing and math labs, basic skills courses, and Writing Assessment Mentors and other staff who are trained to work with these students. CCV has a student support services team that can, in some cases, provide testing, tutorial, and referral services. They also run a very successful course called *Dimensions of Learning*. This special course helps students develop the skills and confidence they need to make either the initial or return trip to higher education productive. Contact your local coordinator if you have students who may need some of these services.
- **Oh yes, the pay. How and when do I get it?** You will be paid in two installments: after your first attendance and course description are submitted and the rest when your course is finished. Attendance sheets and evaluations must be completed and submitted before your final check will be issued.

Part II

SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Getting Off On The Right Foot

If you were going to travel by car from Vermont to San Francisco, there are some things you should do before starting off. You'll probably want to collect the best maps, check the car's fluids and belts, get the car tuned, schedule day-to-day destinations so that each leg of the trip is approximately equal, etc., etc. You may also want to consult with others who have made the trip before.

One of the things we hope to do in this handbook is to share with you the collected wisdom of staff and other instructors as a way to prepare you for the CCV teaching journey. This handbook is designed to help make the trip go as smoothly as possible.

The previous section provided some general information about the college—its history, philosophy, mission, degree program, and the people and services that make it all work. This chapter will attempt to address some of the topics and issues that we feel provide an important background, a solid grounding to support your actual teaching efforts.

To present this section of the handbook, we will adopt a slightly more philosophical and theoretical bent to explore a few teaching and learning issues that underlie the effective education of adult learners.

Roles and Goals: Thinking About Yourself as an Instructor

> *We unwittingly get our thoughts entangled in certain metaphors and even act fatally on the strength of them.*
> —George Eliot

Playing A Variety of Roles

Robert J. Kloss (1987), a professor of English at William Patterson College, says that many instructors teach based on certain metaphors related to the teaching-learning process. It's a real problem, he says, when we believe in these metaphors and cling to them as though everyone else also accepted them as givens.

For example, an instructor who believes in the "student as empty vessel waiting to be filled" metaphor will focus on pouring the course content into the receptacle students. Some instructors, on the other hand, behave as though college is a "psychology laboratory" where students are "trained" to react to positive and negative stimuli of various sorts.

Kloss believes that teaching from the perspective of these and other such metaphors can be detrimental to the learning process. So, for the past twenty five years, he has been casting off old metaphors and trying out new ones. Recently, he has tried the Zen Master, stranger, studio artist, athletic coach, and baseball right-fielder instructional metaphors.

Kloss can play different roles at any given moment in the classroom. He has, however, found that roles associated with coaching and playing right field work best for him. Good coaches, he says, are catalysts and facilitators. They stress practice, intervene frequently with observations and suggestions, and use other players (students) as peer teachers. The coaching role requires Kloss not only to provide information but also to mix it with a lot of question-asking.

Right fielders, on the other hand, are participant-observers. When assuming this role, Kloss likes to get out of the class's way and let interaction and learning go on until someone "hits one his way." If appropriate, he takes it; if not, he calls for another "player" to take it. He shouts encouragement, praises good plays, and asks how bad ones could have been prevented.

One experienced CCV instructor sees herself as a "work manager" or the creator of a climate in which each student can learn. She says that good managers do not drive others to work (learn) but orchestrate the setting, the goals, and the stimuli. Their job is to facilitate the interaction among students. Like a work manager, the teacher needs both role and style flexibility and must avoid being wedded to any one or two modes. Other

instructor roles can include subject matter-sage, learning consultant, resource person, lecturer, moral supporter, A-V person, tutor, goal-setter, and so on.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986) suggest that "the teacher as midwife" is another appropriate role for instructors to consider. The midwife-teacher is drawing knowledge from the students rather than depositing it in their heads as, for example, "banker-teachers" would. The midwife-teacher assists the students in the "birthing" of their education much as the midwife and mother work together in the birthing of a child. Midwife-teachers support and assist; they see their role as fostering student growth and development. They arrange situations where dialogue between teacher and students and among students can occur freely. This interactive process stimulates the natural tendency of everyone to grow and learn.

We think that it is important for instructors to think about themselves, consider their ideas about education, and become aware of their own preferred teaching styles and roles in the educational process. Getting back to Kloss, that is his point exactly—that we all, consciously or unconsciously adopt metaphors for ourselves as teachers and that we can become better teachers when we look closely at our metaphors and choose the ones that have the most potential for improving the teaching-learning process in our classrooms.

Identifying Your Teaching Goals

What are the most important things that students should gain from your course? Do you want them to become critical thinkers? Should they learn how to apply principles and theories to new problems and situations? Maybe it is important that students discover how the experts and specialists in your field operate. Should students, while learning your subject, develop effective reading and writing skills, etc., etc.? What about encouraging each student's growth toward her/his natural potential as a person and as a learner?

K. Patricia Cross (1988) thinks that instructors should examine their own teaching goals and include objectives and activities in their courses that will accomplish the most important ones. This can ensure that the primary goals you have for your students don't get overlooked in the details of the more specific course content.

However you define your role and regardless of what goals you'd like to emphasize, some early thinking about yourself as a teacher can make the course a more satisfying experience for you and a more productive one for your students.

Thinking about the Student as an Adult

> *"You are old, father William," the young man said, "and your hair has become very white, and yet you incessantly stand on your head. Do you think, at your age, it is right?"*
> —Lewis Carroll

Many CCV students are adults. Some are young adults of traditional college age; many are adults who are returning to school after taking time out to start families and jobs. Others are older adults who have been away from the classroom for several years. While the average CCV student is in her early 30's, CCV students range in age from 17 to 70. In fact, most CCV classes have a rich mixture of different age levels and this diversity can make teaching at CCV both exciting and challenging.

We can make a few general observations about differences in the way that younger and older adults tend to respond to instruction in an academic environment. Some traditional age college students see knowledge as something that has to be acquired and accumulated, rather than something that they help to create. Knowledge, to them, is in the heads of teachers and on the pages of the textbooks. In that light, they may expect and relate well to instruction and testing that requires them to retain and repeat factual information or develop and demonstrate a specific skill.

Put another way, younger adults may be less concerned with whether the knowledge is relevant to their lives or directly useful in some immediate practical sense. While they may see that course content is potentially useful in the future, the immediate "functionality" of knowledge does not seem to be as important to younger students.

Jean Steitz (1989) points out that this "separation" from the content can be a real advantage when it is necessary to focus on detail or memorize facts without regard to utility or meaning in relation to real life situations. She also notes that younger students can often work faster and deal with a larger quantity of questions in a testing situation. However, this approach to learning occasionally translates into a passive, "fill-me-up-with-the-right-stuff" participatory style in the classroom.

Some older adults who have been away from any formal schooling for several years may also approach the classroom with the same mindset. After all, for many of them, that is how they remember school. However, there is a natural tendency for adults to try to connect new learning to the experience base that they have already established or apply it to some specific goal. In fact, adult students may see your course as a step towards finding a better job, upgrading the one they have, or starting a new career—very pragmatic stuff. Education, at least for the moment, is a means, not an end. Adults want to use education, not just receive it. Their approach is essentially practical.

At the same time, however, some older adult students come to us because they want "to take control of their lives." They may be facing a life crisis—divorce, death of a spouse, "empty nest," loss of employment, etc.—and they see education as an active, positive response.

Many older adults have reached a period in their lives where, for the first time, they realize that the time left to get an education is limited. As a result, and in contrast with younger students, they feel pressed to make up for lost time, learn what they need to quickly, and get on with the rest of their lives. When this need to learn fast conflicts with rusty or underdeveloped skills, the older learner may become frustrated and discouraged. Compounding this situation, there is evidence that the speed and ability with which we perform tasks that require short term memory deteriorates with age.

Adults are mothers, fathers, and the counterparts of butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers. They do not easily see themselves as students. Going to school is an add-on activity for most older adults and even for some of the younger ones attending CCV. Some of your students may have to rush from work to class and then hustle home to relieve the baby-sitter. They may have to squeeze study and library time between the laundry, making meals, nursing babies, grocery shopping, and a myriad of other daily responsibilities. Study habits, routines, and skills may exist only as distant memories. If you lose a few of these students, it may have nothing to do with your teaching; it may have more to do with their inability to cope with family, job, and studenting responsibilities all at once.

Even in the face of many obstacles, adults with strong motivation and an incredible degree of persistence often overcome many of these difficulties. Adults want to learn; they don't want to be pampered. In fact, lowering your sights would be counterproductive—adults generally need, want, and deserve higher expectations. And, if there is anything we have learned from research, it is that high teacher expectations and high student achievement go hand in hand.

> *I enrolled at the Community College three different times before I actually stepped into the classroom. Self-doubt plagued me. What if I couldn't do it? What if I failed all my classes? What if I failed to meet the deadline I set for myself? It became an obsession. Eventually, I began to calm down.*
>
> —A CCV Student

It is important to note that when some adults turn to education, they are both fearful and hopeful. The fear may come from poor past school experiences; the hope from the belief that education will help them make significant improvements in their lives. One student told her advisor that she drove around the block four times before she got up the courage to come into the office. She was unsure of her ability but willing

to take the risk. This combination of feelings can be in delicate balance— a little failure may lead to discouragement while small successes can strengthen the student's courage and resolve. Instructors who are aware of this dynamic can work to support and encourage these students while providing them with challenging learning experiences.

Instructors can also acknowledge that not passing a course does not always indicate failure. For some students, walking in the door of a CCV office was a major success—a small step toward an education. It may take one or two tries to "pass" a course, but we need to remember that successes may come in small but steady increments—and that our encouragement for the things they do well may build the foundation on which eventual success in the classroom can be built.

As people age, differences among them are magnified. We all accumulate experiences, interests, and commitments in idiosyncratic ways, and therefore, as we get older, we tend to become more unique as individuals. Adults, as a group, then, are more heterogeneous than ,say, a class of 18-22 year olds. In other words, individual differences among students may be greater in a class of CCV students than it might be in a more traditional college setting. Sheckley (1984) notes that traditional approaches to college teaching, which often operate on the assumption of a group of fairly homogeneous students, may be a poor match with the diversity that inevitably occurs in a class of adult learners.

Traditionally, introductory and survey courses are common in the first two years of college. These courses normally address their subjects by touching on the fundamental concepts, principles, and information pertinent to introducing the subject to the learners or establishing a basis for any further study in that field. In-depth analysis of any particular issue is left for the more advanced or specialized courses in the discipline. Younger students seem to be quite comfortable with this approach to delivering subject matter content. We are finding, however, that many older adults, once interested in a topic, prefer to stay with it until they are satisfied that they have explored it in depth. For the adult learner, the traditional approach is a little like getting to taste samples off the dessert tray without getting to order the one you are most intrigued with.

Awareness of this difference between younger and older adults can help instructors of introductory courses to plan ways to accommodate both of these seemingly conflicting needs. Some CCV instructors have found that they can organize their courses around case studies or topics of high interest. The foundational skills and concepts are then learned as they become necessary to effectively explore the topic/case at hand.

Thinking About Development As A Lifelong Process

As more adults participate in college experiences, adult development is becoming a popular topic in higher education. Gail Sheehy's best-selling book, *Passages:*

Predictable Crises of Adulthood (1976), generated more wide-spread interest in this topic. Yet, until the early 70's, much of the psychology and education literature led us to believe that we essentially stopped growing and developing by age 24. The experts told us that, with few exceptions, later changes led in one direction—downward. Therefore, it is nice to know that a spate of recent research confirms what we may have suspected all along—that learning, growth, and development are lifelong processes. Adult development isn't just newer cars and fatter bank accounts anymore.

In her book, Sheehy describes seeing a boy's face blown off while she was interviewing him in Northern Ireland. This event helped to trigger a profound change in Sheehy's view of herself and her life. It caused her to reflect on life in general and on her life in particular. She no longer could see herself as a happy and successful writer and carefree world traveler. She became aware of her own vulnerability and of the finiteness of life in general. This horrible event stimulated a period of **reevaluation** about life and Sheehy's own role in it.

According to William Bridges (1977) and others, adults go through phases in the life cycle just as kids go through phases as they grow up. However, we are finding that timetables for the adult phases may be much less predictable than, say, the "terrible two's" are for children. Various labels have been given to the adult phases; among the most common are: Breaking Away or Leaving Home; Reaching Out or Moving in to the Adult World; Questions, Questions (around age 30); Midlife Explosion (some observers now think this, for most people, is an exaggeration); Settling Down; and The Mellowing (usually after 50).

What we can say, with some confidence, is that many adults, at different points in their lives, experience periods of questioning and reevaluation. "What have I been doing with my life?" "Am I satisfied with it?" "Just who am I, anyway?" "What's happening to me?" and, "Where do I go from here?" are typical of the questions we ask ourselves at these times.

Questioning periods can be difficult because we are not always satisfied with what we find. That dissatisfaction, however, can lead to serious reflection which, in turn, can motivate us to make changes. Change, as we all know, can be either productive and energizing or painful and disruptive. Sometimes it can be all of those things. Relationships may crumble or blossom; a new career or a return to formal education might be initiated. Bridges calls the questioning periods that can lead to significant change "second thoughts." He says that when they lead to some kind of successful resolution, periods of "inner tranquility" often follow. Growth and a new level of maturity (development) can result.

These ideas, of course, over-simplify a complex process that may occur throughout our lives. Most adult development theorists, nevertheless, do agree on a few major points:

1. Life progresses in somewhat sequential phases and each phase is often marked by "turning points," where we may have those second thoughts. These may or may not be periods of crisis. Turning points are, however, periods of both vulnerability and potential.

2. Turning points are sometimes, but not always, triggered by marker events such as graduation, marriage, childbirth, divorce, loss of job, death of a loved one, etc.

3. Periods of transition are often followed by periods of relative stability. Growth most often occurs when the challenges are slightly greater than our present coping skills but not so overwhelming that we retreat to safer territory.

Many adult learners enter college because they are experiencing a turning point or transition in their lives. Whatever the situation, students bring these aspects of their lives into the classroom where they will be a factor in the overall teaching-learning situation.

Adults Change in Other Ways Too

> *Some students are very black and white; only something that is proven to them will be acceptable. Other students are able to visualize a concept without it being right in front of them.*
>
> —A CCV Graduate

As adults address the issues and problems that arise at different points in the life cycle, they also may be changing in the ways that they perceive knowledge and the truth. In other words, adults can change in the ways that they think about the world around them. With experience and education, people can develop new frames of reference from which they may perceive the world around them in an expanded manner. This type of development was first noticed in children by the famous Swiss psychologist/biologist Jean Piaget. Piaget noticed that children, as they grew older, developed new ways of perceiving and acting on their environment.

Changing patterns in the way a student understands and reasons obviously has a direct influence on teaching and learning. For the most part, people learn to think and reason in increasingly complex ways over time. We become less sure that life consists of rights and wrongs and blacks and whites. We begin to question authorities and develop a healthy skepticism about what we read.

Periodically, we find that our old frameworks of understanding no longer account for all the new events, information, and ideas we encounter. We either have to reject what we are experiencing, attempt to alter it to fit our existing ideas, or establish a new

framework to accommodate this new learning. Put simply, our old ideas about the way things work can get upset or disequilibrated when we are exposed to enough new information and ideas that do not fit. If, for example, we have assumed that what is printed in textbooks is true, and then find that different textbooks provide conflicting information about the same topic, we may start to question our previous assumption about textbooks as a reliable source of truth.

This process can also be illustrated in the following example with young children. Many young children insist that trees make the wind. If you wave a branch, you can make a breeze. After all, where else can the wind come from? Eventually, however, most children encounter conflicting evidence; blowing on a leaf will make the branch move. The child assimilates this information and (usually at about age 5 or 6) creates a new model of how things work that incorporates this new discovery.

We used to think that intellectual development continued into adolescence and, at most, into the early twenties. Now, however, evidence is mounting that many adults continue to develop intellectually, although some get stuck at certain levels, and most of us never reach our full potential for intellectual growth.

For the purposes of this handbook, we will brush lightly over some of the ways that adults can change as they accumulate new experiences and especially as they participate in formal education. Once again, however, it is important to remember that any attempt to describe or explain human behavior is an oversimplification. Theories can not begin to capture the actual complexities of human behavior; they can provide only frameworks for greater understanding.

In a typical CCV class, students are at different stages of intellectual development and exhibit different ways to think about things. The lenses through which they view knowledge and truth may differ significantly. And, these differing perceptions may influence the way students receive and act on what is taught and what is presented in textbooks and other sources of information.

The following summary is an attempt to describe some of the ways students at various levels of intellectual development approach classroom learning. To prepare this summary, we have borrowed from the work of Karplus, Arons, Kurfiss, Clinchy, and Perry.

- Some students interpret almost everything literally; they take the word of authorities at face value and miss inconsistencies in logic. Other students look for evidence to support arguments and they question the underlying assumptions of the author.
- Some students assume that there are right and wrong answers to everything; things are either one way or the other. Others realize that uncertainty can be O.K. and that truth often depends on context, circumstance, or the set of personal lenses through which the learner is trying to understand the material.

- Some students have trouble determining what's important and what is not as important. They don't know which issues are central to a topic, which ones are peripheral, what facts or concepts can be assumed, or which ones need to be stated, demonstrated, or proven. Other students compare the relative importance of different elements and determine which terms need defining and which concepts need to be explained.
- A few students usually have to be reminded when previously learned principles or procedures can be applied to new situations. They want step-by-step instructions. Others automatically apply previous learning to new situations.
- Some students reject any hypothesis that contradicts their own experience or sense of reality. And, once a solution to a problem or answer to a question is found, they show little interest in further exploration. Other students are willing to speculate, forecast, or predict based on completely hypothetical models.
- When making a point, some students focus only on supporting associations and ignore cases that don't fit their arguments. They fail to see that different variables have differing effects on their assertions. Others separate the effects of different variables, recognize the limitations of their hypotheses, and consider the weight of evidence.

As you can see, the teacher faced with a classroom of students who, as individuals, are at different stages in their cognitive growth, faces a great challenge. How can we help students to see beyond simple answers and certainties? How can we encourage students to question their perspectives on truth and knowledge? After all, it can be difficult and upsetting to give up one's old, more comfortable, and perhaps simpler perspectives. Like climbing a ladder, the higher you get, the less security you feel in your position. However, as you get higher, the world becomes a much larger, more interesting place. And, as a consequence, it offers much greater potential for enriching experiences. If it is part of human nature to learn, grow, and develop, then education, if it is worth anything, should stimulate and facilitate that process.

A New Perspective on Adult Development

> *At midlife, men discover the value of intimacy, the importance of which women have known from the start.*
>
> —Carol Gilligan

Much of the original research on life cycle and intellectual development used male subjects and emphasized that the growth of the individual depended largely on successful separation from dependent relationships—from the mother, the family, and

eventually teachers and mentors. The theorists concluded that we achieve self-reliance through independent and autonomous thinking (Surrey 1991) as well as through ambition, achievement orientation, assertiveness, and competitiveness. The highly developed mind should be rational, analytical, and dispassionate.

However, recent research with women subjects has shown that many people build their sense of self from a more interpersonal perspective. They do not move toward separation but toward connection. Interconnectedness, not independence, underpins the formation of their identities. And, developing strong ties to others requires empathic understanding and emotionality—a significantly different model than the one based primarily on the study of males.

We are now beginning to realize that the more intuitive, emotional, and connected approach to learning and development supplements and complements the earlier theories. "Connected learning" has significant advantages that contribute greatly to both the student's development and to the classroom environment. In the classroom, students with natural tendencies toward affiliation and cooperation can help create a strong sense of community and mutual interest. By using collaborative and cooperative methods to achieve the course objectives, instructors and students can raise the general level of accomplishment a couple of notches, to say the least.

What Can Instructors Do To Stimulate Development?

> *"Too often, all of us fail to teach the most important thing, which is that clear thinking, active discussion, and excellent writing are all necessary for intellectual freedom, and that these require hard work."*
>
> —Adrienne Rich

Many educators believe that adult development theory has significant implications for college teaching. For example, it is important for an instructor to know that many adult students are going through significant change and that consequently their readiness and motivation to learn is high. If instructors can relate the course content to adult learners' experiences and goals, they can facilitate this period of growth and increase the amount of learning that occurs.

If you are aware that students go through different stages of intellectual growth, you will understand why some students attempt to use concrete reasoning patterns to learn concepts that require more abstract thinking. You will be more sensitive to the gaps that often exist between the way material is presented and the readiness of some students to receive it. And, in that light, you can translate the material for those students into more concrete terms or you can sequence subject matter so that it progresses from

the more familiar and concrete to the less familiar and more abstract. At the same time, thinking and reasoning skills can be gained through interaction among students and between students and instructor. As students with differing perspectives engage a topic, new levels of understanding often emerge.

> *"A favorite saying of mine is that the purpose of college is to calm the disturbed and disturb the calm."*
>
> —David C. Finster

The growth and development of students can be stimulated in the classroom environment. Here are a few suggestions for how that can be accomplished.

1. Adopt a mix of presentation styles—small groups for those who need connection, lectures for others, Socratic questioning for some, and reaction papers for still others.

2. Don't be afraid to challenge your students and upset their world views a little to provoke new kinds of thinking. At the same time, support their efforts with encouragement and intersperse easier material with the challenging stuff. Don't forget, success does breed success.

3. Let students learn from each other with lots of opportunities for exchange of ideas and for people to connect with each other over a topic or problem.

4. Investigate real problems so that students can experience how knowledge is created from evidence that is produced in the classroom. This classroom-as-laboratory approach can supplement the more traditional lecture methods to get students actively engaged with your discipline. In a microcosmic sense, history students become historians and business students become managers as they learn the content of those fields.

And Then, There's the Matter of Style

> *"I can see spirits, feel presences, sense influences that elude the ordinary person. I know the rare, am totally conversant with the unusual, and familiar with the mysterious...On the other hand," Shirley says as she bumps into a tree while walking along with her friend, "I have trouble hacking it with the commonplace."*
>
> —From *Miss Peach* — a cartoon by Mel Lazarus

We all, to one degree or another, march to different drummers. The way we dress, communicate with others, and approach a problem can be reflective of our own unique styles of behavior. Some of us are natural observers who prefer a visual approach to learning; some of us like to listen and reflect on what we hear. "I don't learn something

until I actually experience it, try it out, and feel what it's like," expresses the preference of still another type of learner.

Some people require complete silence before they can concentrate and study. Others can concentrate better with the T.V. or stereo on full-blast. A room's lighting is critical to some people, a neat or cluttered environment makes a difference to others. Some learners rely on intuition and tend towards a more subjective approach. Others take a more objective stance and rely on logical thinking to solve problems.

People obviously differ widely in how they learn, think, and behave; it would take pages of text just to touch on the differences that have been studied. We will, however, take a closer look at a learning style theory that seems especially relevant for college instructors.

The Kolb Model

This approach to learning style was conceived originally by David Kolb at M.I.T. and later expanded upon by Bernice McCarthy and others. It can help us understand adult learner needs and provide us with a rationale for using a broad range of classroom activities. When Kolb was a professor/freshman advisor at M.I.T., he was concerned that each year a certain percentage of his freshman students were struggling to keep up, discouraged with their performance, and generally unhappy with their programs. These students were as bright, qualified, and as hard-working as any of the other students. Something, however, made them different.

Borrowing from the earlier work of John Dewey and Kurt Lewin, Kolb determined that people rely on four principal modes of learning: **concrete experience (CE); reflective observation (RO); abstract conceptualization (AC); and active experimentation (AE).**

He suggests that to be effective, learners need to involve themselves fully and openly in new experiences, reflect on what happened, determine what it means, and experiment with their new ideas or take some action based on them. While the action step completes the cycle of learning, the results can be fed into the next cycle and so on.

Kolb also discovered that people tend to have characteristic preferences for certain modes of learning over others. Some learners will jump right into a new situation and "feel" the experience; they are likely to be more people-oriented and prefer exercises and hands-on experiences. Others are the observer types. They are comfortable watching the event take place; they are more tentative, reflective, and impartial. They like lectures and presentations.

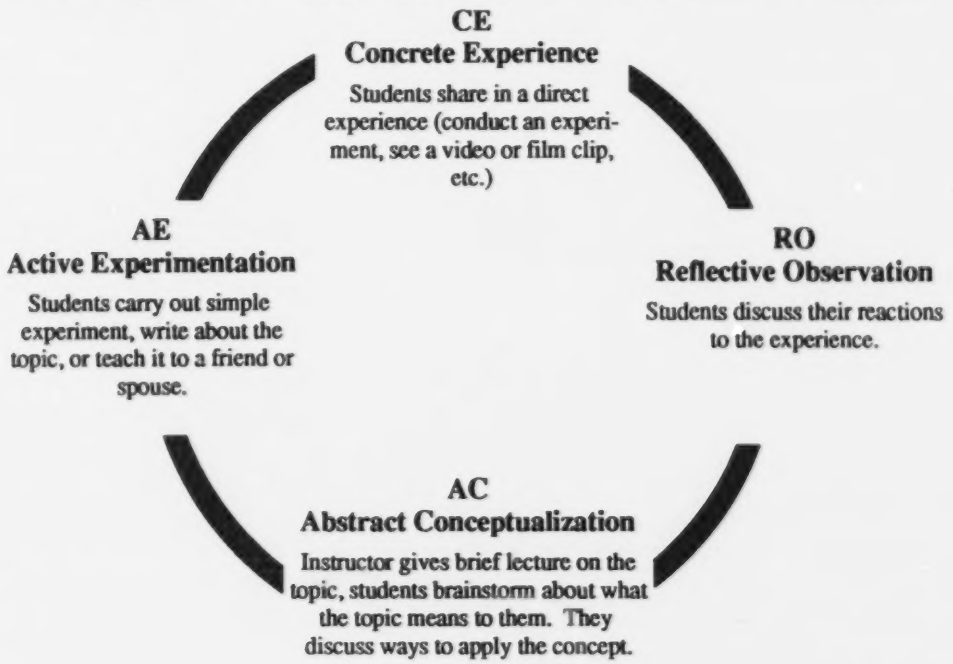
Still other learners take an analytical and conceptual approach; they are the "thinkers." The thinkers tend to be less oriented toward people and more interested in symbols and things. They might get frustrated by "discovery" learning approaches like simulations and role-playing. Finally, there are the "doers." Like the "feelers," they like

an active approach to learning but their actions are more structured and experimental in nature. They like projects, small group discussions, and action-oriented homework assignments. They also tend to be extroverts and risk-takers.

As you can see from this approach to learning style, some people take a more active approach to learning, some tend to be more passive and reflective. Some learners prefer concrete experience while others deal better with the abstract. The fact is that in any group of people, you can find several different combinations of these preferences and modes.

Because Kolb's model integrates two dimensions of cognitive growth and learning (active-passive & concrete-abstract) into a single framework, it has direct application to instructional design. While it would be nearly impossible to design individual activities for each student in a large class, we believe that courses and other learning experiences can be arranged to mesh with the effective learning cycle. Activities can be designed to engage the four learning processes directly. The cycle starts with a specific experience in which the learner can get personally involved. The next activity should stimulate the student to reflect on the experience and figure out what it means.

A brainstorming or similar exercise then allows the students to draw some conclusions about the material and add some of their own ideas. In the fourth part of the cycle, the students take those ideas and apply them to real life situations (interview a friend, explain the concept(s) to a spouse, etc.) if possible. To follow the learning cycle, an instructor plans a wide variety of activities. And, variety of method assures that the


CE
Concrete Experience
Students share in a direct experience (conduct an experiment, see a video or film clip, etc.)
RO
Reflective Observation
Students discuss their reactions to the experience.
AC
Abstract Conceptualization
Instructor gives brief lecture on the topic, students brainstorm about what the topic means to them. They discuss ways to apply the concept.
AE
Active Experimentation
Students carry out simple experiment, write about the topic, or teach it to a friend or spouse.

needs of different types of learners (auditory, visual, active, passive, etc.) will be met to some degree. It also gives students opportunities to develop and grow by participating in activities that do not exactly match their preferred learning styles. The above diagram attempts to illustrate how learning style theory can be applied in a classroom setting.

Part III

AN OUNCE OF PREPARATION...

The CCV Course Description

Three Rational Questions—
1. Where am I?
2. Where do I want to be?
3. How do I know I am getting there?

—R. L. Stevenson

The first section of this guide was about the college, its history, philosophy and services; the second section considered how you might view yourself as a teacher, the nature of adults as learners, and how the teaching-learning process can be responsive to both your needs and theirs. This section will attempt to build on those ideas and talk about ways to plan your course. We will use the categories from CCV's Course Description as an organizing framework for helping you through this process.

If you are new at teaching, you may be tempted to use a previous course plan and follow an accepted text. This will work and will usually ensure an adequate course. But remember, one of the strengths of CCV is that many of its instructors are practitioners—people who actually do what they teach. Your experience may, in some areas, go far beyond what's in the text (if you choose to use one). And in that light, the sooner you put your personal stamp on the course, the more fun it will be for you and your students.

Developing the Course Objectives

Course planning is a focussing process, starting out broadly and gradually zeroing in on your material. The first step is to envision the end—the content and skills that students should gain in the course. Next, these general outcomes should be transformed into what your students should be able to do to prove what they know. The objectives called for in the first section of the course description should specify the student **performances** you would expect if they learned the material. The question to ask is: What is it that the students must **do** to show that they have learned the skill or gained the knowledge?

The objectives will become the touchstones for all other aspects of the course. And while learning doesn't happen in a straight line (thank goodness), if the class follows an unexpected diversion, explores a tangent, or gets trapped in a cul de sac, it's always nice to have a map of your original destination. Outcome-based objectives clarify expectations for students and provide specific targets at which instructors can aim their activities. Even if the college has already provided "essential objectives" for your course, we feel that writing objectives is an important process for instructors to learn about.

Objectives are often written in such fuzzy, broad terms that students have difficulty interpreting them. Given this lack of clarity, teachers find it hard to measure student progress in accomplishing course objectives. In fact, recent studies show that students actually learn more in courses where objectives clearly express what students are expected to be able to do upon successful completion.

Let's take a brief look at how to write performance outcome objectives. You might start with a general outcome that you want for all students. Here is an example: *Students will gain an awareness of the historical geological processes that helped to shape northern New England.* This may be a desirable outcome; however, it is too vague to be useful. How will students show that they have gained this awareness? The answer to that question can give us a more observable outcome: *Students will be able to identify four major geological events that helped to shape northern New England.* The second form of the same objective is clearer, more precise, and measurable.

The key is in the action verb, in this case *identify*. We could have also used the word *describe* to show a slightly greater awareness. And, if we want students to demonstrate an even higher level of understanding, we could ask students to be able to *explain the effects of each of the four major events.* If what you expect is a highly sophisticated grasp of the topic, you might ask students to *compare and contrast the four major events and evaluate each one in terms of its overall effect on the region's geology.*

> *"If an idea cannot be expressed in language that a reasonable, attentive seventh grader can understand, someone is jiving someone else."*
>
> —Postman and Weingartner

You can indicate the level of learning you want students to gain by the verbs you select. The important thing is to use verbs that describe observable actions like listing, naming, identifying, describing, explaining, distinguishing, predicting, etc. Here are a few more examples of both fuzzy and clearly written objectives.

Fuzzy: *The students will be able to comprehend the causes of inflation.*

Clear: *The students will be able to distinguish among three types of inflation: demand-pull, cost-push, and structural.*

Fuzzy: *The students will be able to understand why Europeans came to North and South America and the problems that they faced once they got there.*

Clear: *The students will be able to discuss the reasons why Europeans originally came to North and South America and describe the major problems they faced in the early settlements.*

Some instructors use brainstorming techniques to start the process of setting objectives. The most important skills or information highpoints jump out quickly, much as the Metropolitan Museum of Art would be an obvious high point on a list of places to see on your first trip to New York City. As the list grows, more esoteric ideas will emerge, until the proposed "must see" list for your course goes well beyond what students can learn in a semester.

This signals the next stage—prioritization. Which of these idealized objectives is essential? Which would be nice if you had time, but you could live without? Have you included objectives (if appropriate) that promote student development in reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking, doing research, etc.? Do you have an objective(s) that focuses on any of the skills needed by people working in your field?

Then ask yourself how much depth or how advanced a skill level you can reasonably expect to achieve in each of the objectives that survived the first cut. This is the point at which you can tinker with those action verbs to get just the right ones. If you are teaching a course where the college has provided essential objectives, you may want to think about adding an extra one or two that reflect your own personal goals for students.

SPECIAL NOTE: One benefit of objectives written in the style we recommend is that they can include both learning skills and content material in the same statement. Here is an example:

The students will be able to ***compare and contrast*** *the developmental* ***theories of Freud, Erikson, and Piaget.***

The cognitive skills of comparing and contrasting is combined with the content of the three theories. The following objectives illustrate further examples:

Students will be able to ***validate hypotheses*** *by using appropriate* ***data from readings and other sources.***

Students will be able to ***describe and evaluate*** *the most* ***common methods of joining*** *used in cabinetmaking.*

Interestingly, the skills in the last example are the cognitive ones of describing and evaluating—not the manual woodworking skill of joining. The content in this case is the subject of different joining methods.

The instructor is the primary architect of the course plan, but at CCV, where most students are adults, it is important to solicit their ideas. The more adults are involved in planning the course, the more sense of "ownership" and commitment they will feel. Courses vary widely in terms of how much student input is feasible. For example, many math concepts are totally new until the teacher has introduced them, and the students simply can't know ahead of time what they need to know. **College-established "essential objectives" must be included verbatim in your final list but student input can help determine if additional ones are needed.**

In this stage of preparation, you should treat everything somewhat tentatively. Later, in the first class meeting, discussions with students can help you make some adjustments. Even if student input does not lead to significant changes, the process of consulting with students about the course will help to establish an atmosphere of mutual sharing and serve to clarify expectations.

Planning Your Teaching Methods and Learning Activities

Once you have a good set of objectives, the next phase of the planning process involves developing a set of activities designed to accomplish the objectives.

As we noted earlier, activities should be varied and they should be selected specifically to accomplish objectives. They also can be selected to support a particular instructional scheme like the learning cycle presented earlier.

In any event, a good starting point for getting a general plan of activities would be to look at each objective and try to envision an appropriate activity or teaching method for accomplishing it. For example, objectives that deal with the attainment of specific knowledge—facts and information—might be accomplished through lecture, audiovisual presentation, a debate, a panel discussion, reading assignments, computer-assisted instruction, student recitation, question and answer periods, diads, small group work, etc.

Higher order objectives that elicit a deeper understanding of the material, the ability to apply it, or to be analytical with it, might require activities like Socratic discussion, small group discussion and problem-solving, case study methods, dramatization, writing exercises, simulation games, student presentations, etc.

If the objective requires students to learn a specific skill, you can choose from methods such as skill practice exercises, demonstrations, drill exercises, simulation

games, coaching, computer-assisted instruction, programmed instruction, role-playing, etc.

Of course, one activity may help accomplish more than one objective or one level of student learning and, conversely, it may take several activities to fully achieve a particular learning outcome. Some activities might be in-class types, others can be used in homework assignments. Some, like writing exercises, may be appropriate for both settings. The idea, at least for course description purposes, is to generate an initial list of activities that you can add to or modify as the course develops and you get to know your students and your own teaching style better. In the next section of the handbook we will discuss how to actually use some of these activities.

Assessment/Evaluation Strategies and Criteria

Assessment of student learning has become a national priority and it is a critical element in the design of any instructional program. Nearly all educators agree that students need frequent and accurate feedback on how well they are doing. So, in the planning phase, it is a good idea to think about how you want to monitor and measure student progress towards the course objectives and towards your teaching goals.

As with the design of learning activities, the course objectives are the guiding elements in selecting evaluation strategies. Direct observation of student performance is one approach to checking on skill development. Paper and pencil quizzes work well for evaluating retention of important facts and information. Essay-type writing assignments and student projects can be used to measure higher order conceptual skills. Observing student performance in small and large group discussions can reveal a great deal about how well students are grasping the material. These activities may or may not be used to evaluate student performance.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)

Keeping a check on how well you are doing and how well the class is going from the student perspective is another aspect of evaluation that can pay benefits. Pat Cross and Thomas Angelo (1988) suggest ending class periods by having each student do a "one- minute paper." The paper consists of two questions: What's the most significant thing you learned in this session? What's the most significant question you have about today's lesson? Student responses can reveal whether they are learning what you think you are teaching.

One CCV instructor takes a similar approach using index cards. Each student, at the end of class, is asked: What was the most important thing you learned in this class? What did we discuss that you don't understand? and, What activities should we do more often or less often? At the beginning of the next class, the instructor shares (keeping student responses anonymous of course) the results of the previous week's index-card assessment and makes class adjustments based on the information.

Another instructor keeps a notebook with a section for each student. He makes anecdotal notes in it each week based on what he observed in class. He then periodically meets with individual students and shares his observations and any conclusions that might be drawn from them. This kind of running-record evaluation scheme also provides material the instructor can use in the final evaluation.

On-going assessment of, and feedback on, student progress should be a process designed to improve learning. This type of evaluation is often referred to as "formative." If it is too judgmental or summative in nature (e.g., grades and scores are emphasized), students may focus more on the scores and less on their strengths and weaknesses. In this light, it is important to be clear and specific about what the student has learned and what remains to be learned. Formative evaluation is critical because it also keeps the student up to date on where he/she stands and this prevents unpleasant and unnecessary surprises from occurring at the final evaluation stage.

Classroom assessment techniques are powerful ways to improve both your teaching and the learning that occurs as a result. They can be built into the flow of your regular activities and they can enliven and energize the course. Most good ones are, in themselves, effective teaching strategies or learning activities. If you plan to use classroom assessment, and we strongly encourage you to do so, here are some things to remember.

1. Ideally, the assessment should be based on a specific teaching goal (refer back to the section on Roles and Goals). The goal should be then translated into a question that can be assessed. Here is how one instructor did it:

"One of my primary goals is to get students to engage the subject actively."
Assessible question: "Do my students feel actively involved in the course activities?"
Assessment technique: "Each week, I end the class with a simple exercise. I ask students to write (anonymously) the adjectives that best describe how they feel about this week's in-class activities or homework assignment. Usually, I get words like, 'interested,' 'fascinated,' and 'stimulated.' However, sometimes I get some responses like 'bored,' 'confused,' or 'lost.' When that happens, I know I have some work to do."

2. The technique you design should not be graded. Students must feel free to respond spontaneously and freely. The reason for doing the assessment should be explained to students and it should be clear that the information gained can benefit both the instructor and the students.

3. The first CATs you develop can be simple and easy to administer. They should not require a great deal of time and effort for you or the students. They can fit nicely into the regular flow of your course. The data you collect should be easily interpreted and shared with the class.

4. Most CATs require students to think about and articulate either what they are learning or how they are thinking and feeling. This is a sound educational practice in itself. The fancy term for it is **metacognition** and there is growing evidence that being able to describe what you know, think, feel, and can do enhances learning.

5. You have to be ready to accept some negative feedback and be willing to make some adjustments to the class as a result. On the other hand, what's there is there, and not knowing about it won't make it go away. If you do go ahead with a classroom assessment technique, it is essential that you use the results and share the information with students.

6. Classroom Assessment Techniques provide instructors with an excellent approach to integrating professional development into their regular teaching. They give the instructor immediate feedback on what is working or not working and how much students are learning. With this information, the instructor can make adjustments, check again to see what happens, and incorporate successful strategies into the course when appropriate. One instructor reflects, "Each time I do classroom assessment, I learn something I can use to improve my teaching." See K. Patricia Cross and Thomas A. Angelo's book, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for Faculty* for a variety of pre-designed CATs. Each CCV office has a copy

The question is "Wadja learn?" not "Wadja Get?"
—Anonymous Source

Final Evaluation

The final evaluation is more summative; it occurs at the end of the course and comes too late for students to make meaningful changes in their approach to the course. However, CCV's narrative approach can help students by providing the instructor's final perceptions on their strengths and weaknesses (letter grades S for satisfactory completion and N for not satisfactory are also given). The final evaluation should reflect the cumulative results of earlier, more formative assessment efforts. Narrative evaluations should refer directly to the objectives and inform the students whether and to what degree they have accomplished them.

The Curve vs. The Criteria: There are essentially two approaches to measuring student learning: one is to compare the students to each other and the other is to compare their performance to a set of criteria. The first alternative, otherwise known as "grading-on-the-curve," is a norm-referenced approach. It is based on the premise that where a student stands in relation to other students is what matters. Only a small percentage of people in a given group will excel when this approach is used. A few others will fail and the majority will fall somewhere in the middle (the famous bell-shaped curve).

While normative types of measurement have their legitimate uses, they should be used cautiously in a CCV course. These methods encourage competition and assume that if everyone does well, then there must be something wrong with what is taught or with what is used to measure what was learned. After all, if people, by nature, conform to the bell-shaped curve, then there can only be a few effective learners in a given class. We believe, conversely, that the goal of instruction is for everyone to learn what is taught.

Criteria are like specifications. They establish, in advance, expectations for acceptable performance. The idea of criterion-referencing is to measure change in student behavior toward accomplishing the objectives. Criteria are used to answer the "how well" and "how much" questions, setting standards for accomplishment of the objectives and for expected performance on tests, papers, or other evaluation tools.

Here is an example of how it can work:

> ***Objective:*** *The students will be able to explain the fundamental differences between organic and inorganic chemicals.*
>
> ***Evaluation Method:*** *The question will be asked on a written quiz.*
> ***Evaluation Criteria:*** *Responses will be judged for thoroughness, amount of detail, and clarity of student's explanation.*

Here are two other examples:

> *Papers will be evaluated for the student's ability to develop an hypothesis, reason logically, and use evidence to support findings.*

The student's oral reports will be evaluated for liveliness of presentation, organization of the material, and thoroughness of topic coverage.

When developing criteria, ask yourself how you will know and what you will look for to determine if the objectives have been successfully accomplished. Some objectives, in fact, can be written so that the evaluation criterion is built in to the statement. For example: *The student will be able to write a coherent paragraph that is well-organized and grammatically correct.*

Some students may request traditional letter grades (A, B, or C). If you agree to honor their request, it is especially important to develop clear criteria for what each grade represents. (In fact, the college policy on grading requires this.) The criteria should be developed so that achieving the objectives to the "A" level requires exceptional performance. The criteria should be shared with the requesting students and carefully explained during the first class meeting. In this way, the student who wants an "A" knows exactly what to aim for.

Determining Course Requirements

Your course description should include a detailed account of major requirements. You should note your expectations for completion of homework assignments, projects, and papers. Some instructors like to give students an attached list of readings, other assignments, and class topics on a session-by-session basis. Other instructors prefer to provide students with a general overview assuming that session-by-session plans will change depending on the needs of the students and the progress of the course.

Textbooks and Other Resources

There are three important questions about textbooks: which ones to use, how to use them, and whether to use them at all.

—Kenneth E. Eble

A text is a comfortable tool for teachers and a security blanket for some students. So going without one is worth considering only if you have a good selection of alternative resources available. According to Glen Ross Johnson, Director of Texas A&M's Center for Teaching Excellence, texts provide continuity and a relatively uniform body of basic information. He notes that a good text includes lots of graphs, maps, and diagrams and presents a large amount of information efficiently. If used properly, a text can speed the integration of content allowing more in-class time for applications, analysis, and problem-solving.

On the other hand, the cost of textbooks is increasing rapidly. Some instructors avoid textbooks for that very reason. The financial burden of buying books can be significant

for students on tight budgets. Other instructors are concerned that texts often draw all of the conclusions for students and thus leave little room for creative student thinking. Many texts become quickly outdated; some provide a limited, biased perspective. Covering all the information included in texts sometimes allows precious little time for original source materials and other enriching and supplemental resources. Beware of books written for 18-year-olds; they devote much of their content to providing a basic context that many adults already have. (This is especially true of general business textbooks.)

In any event, if you choose a text, use the text. Students complain bitterly, and rightly so, if they are asked to purchase an expensive text and the instructor rarely refers to it.

Eble (1976) recommends that instructors learn to use class time to clarify and supplement the text material rather than repeating what is in print. He says that text assignments can be discussion starters in the next class and that instructors should ask students questions involving applications, analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving.

Library Services

Because CCV does not have a campus per se, there is no one centralized library. Instead we have a "resource room" at each site and we share library materials with other state colleges via interlibrary loan. A toll-free "hot line" to Brattleboro will give you access to a reference service, audiovisual bookings and interlibrary loan (800 431-0025). This number ensures that students can always find help with reference questions.

Each resource room has a small core collection of reference books. More specialized collections are held by particular sites, but can be borrowed by others as needed. So, for example, psychology is a specialty of Brattleboro; anthropology of Montpelier. Information about these collections can be found in our library database called SCOLAR which will be available in your site office at some time soon.

Students looking for library materials are encouraged to look first in their site resource rooms and local public and state college libraries. In addition, CCV students can request books and articles from any of the state colleges via interlibrary loan. They need simply to fill out the request forms available in their local offices.

Keep in mind the level of the course you are teaching and the research experience of your students when giving assignments. New students frequently find it difficult to narrow the topic for a paper or presentation. You can help by offering strategies for guiding them through the research process, and by consulting individually with students who need extra help. Various members of our staff are available to help.

If your assignment requires the use of periodical literature, students will find two indexes in the resource room: *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* and the *Social Sciences Index*. Once students find the relevant citations, they can determine which state

college owns the respective periodical by checking the *Joint Serials List*. Request forms for the articles are then faxed to the proper college.

Sound confusing? Now pretend you're a new student who doesn't know what a "periodical" or an "index" is, and you have a sense of how intimidating an assignment can be if not explained carefully.

Those desiring an overview of the research process (students and instructors alike) should read Biblio-tech, a research manual written by CCV especially for use in an extended campus setting. Additionally, some of your students might benefit from workshops offered at your CCV site on research paper writing or related skills. Encourage them to attend.

If you'd like more information before making research assignments, you might want to refer to the following instructor bulletins available from Coordinators: "Sample Research Assignments for the College Student" (#4); "Research and Reference Services at CCV" (#16); and "Helping Students Overcome the Research Blues" (#12).

Detailed descriptions of all library services the college offers are located in display cases in each CCV site office. And, by all means call the reference line (800 431-0025) with any questions you may have.

Part IV

THE HEART OF THE MATTER: TEACHING YOUR COURSE

The First Night of Class

Like many things, a course has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Each class session has these parts, too. The opening class, however, has special significance because it sets the stage, establishing the tone for the course.

There is no model for the first class that guarantees its success. It is important, though, to structure the first class in a way that deals with its unique aspects. Task number one: overcome any student and instructor jitters. Second, get to know something about your students and let them begin to get acquainted with you and each other. Third, establish some common ground of expectations for the course and for how classes will be run; finally, get students started in learning the course content.

The first class is for building rapport, discussion of the objectives, and tuning up the "orchestra." Here are our suggestions:

- **Come to class early**, tune in to pre-class chatter or nervous silence, get an early sense of the group. Arrange the chairs the way you want them to make the environment comfortable and attractive, and to promote interaction. We suggest a semi-circular configuration. Except for church and movies, adults don't seem to like sitting in rows. Be sure that all handouts, other materials, and audiovisual aids are ready to go.
- **Introduce yourself** as an instructor—talk about your plans, your style, what a typical class session will be like. Don't brag; more importantly, don't recite your

inadequacies. Let students know your areas of special expertise and your willingness to track down what you don't know. Assure them that there are no dumb questions and that you are open to their concerns. At this point you may want to share what you've planned for this first class.

- **Have your students introduce themselves** in a brief exercise. One instructor has students do it in two rounds: Round #1 — the easier-to-talk-about personal stuff—"My name is Julie. I live in Northfield and work for the state at Employment Services." Round #2-their motives for taking the course, background in the subject, etc. The two-rounds approach lets students ease into participating. You should plan to include yourself in both rounds.

- **Introduce the course**—Do a brief preview of the nature of the course, show enthusiasm for the subject, go over the course description, get students' reactions and ask them if they want to add any additional learning expectations. For this part, break into small groups of 3-4 students. This size group makes it more comfortable for individuals to discuss any hopes, doubts, and hidden agenda. Watch the ice break. Each group should select someone to report their findings back to the whole class. Why is this activity important? Adults will feel more ownership in the course if they are consulted. Besides, discussing and "negotiating" the objectives will clarify expectations; this establishes the common ground for the course and will help make the course proceed more smoothly.

- **Get into the material**. The students should leave the first session with some new learning in your subject. Play an audio or video, present a brief lecture, or read a selected passage to them. Follow with a discussion—either in small or large groups. If you use a text, go over it with the class. Explain how it will be used and what its purposes are. Discuss some of the other resources you will be using. Distribute your assignment for next week (we strongly suggest written directions for homework) and discuss any parts of it that need explanation.

- **Save about a half hour** at the end of class for administrivia. Some instructors do this at the start of class; we suggest you wait until the end.

  - Take attendance and emphasize the importance of regular attendance.
  - Go over the phone chain and class cancellation procedures. Discuss your approach to and expectations for homework assignments.
  - Explain the CCV evaluation system. If any students request letter grades, discuss your grading policies and criteria.

- **Do a Classroom Assessment Technique**. Use the final 5-10 minutes to get some feedback on how the class went. We recommend that you use the "one-minute paper" approach or a similar writing exercise. Getting samples of student writing and thinking is an excellent and revealing first class assessment strategy.

- **A few tips and caveats:** Meet for the complete class time but schedule a break at about the half-way mark. Don't lecture for the entire class. Develop a scheme for learning students' names quickly. Move around the classroom, don't stand or sit in one spot. **Be sure to follow up on assignments at the beginning of the next class.**

Staying on Course

There are two things you will be doing during most of your course: covering the material and teaching students. These two processes may or may not happen at the same time. You can cover the course content and not teach students much and you can teach students a lot and not cover all of the content. One of our experienced instructors says that covering the material should take 80% of your time, leaving 20% for checking to see what is happening to students. This is the formative evaluation (Classroom Assessment Techniques) we mentioned earlier. While checking-in is especially critical early on, it is important to keep your antenna up throughout the course.

> *The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this fact and teach him accordingly.*
>
> —David Ausubel

Organizing the content so that students learn it is another issue. We mentioned the Kolb model in the section on learning style. This approach, if followed regularly, promotes variety in instructional methods and it provides experiences that touch on many different student learning styles. Of course, a lot of what you do will depend on your subject and your own personal teaching style.

Instructors can often benefit from some kind of framework for preparing course activities. Some textbooks suggest particular approaches and can be useful if they are congruent with your course objectives. The following sequence is adapted from two tested approaches to instructional design: Mastery Learning and Expository Teaching. Different adaptations of it have been used successfully by instructors from a wide variety of disciplines.

1. Take the course objectives and determine which objective(s) or sub-parts of an objective will be learned in a particular class session or lesson. Translate these hoped-for outcomes into an overall, general goal for the session or for a specific lesson.
2. Present the class with an overview of the content to be learned in the session. This statement can be delivered simply as a mini-lecture or it can be presented

in a short reading passage, a cartoon, a series of slides, a tape recording, a demonstration, etc. It should be relatively short and as simple as possible. This step serves as an "advance organizer" for the lesson and provides the students with an anchor for the more specific, detailed elements to follow.

3. Through a question-and-answer session, determine the degree to which the students catch on to the organizing concept. Once again, this is classroom assessment. If some students don't understand it, you will have to provide further explanation. Wilbert J. McKeachie in a nifty little book, *Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher*, points out that learners can only "create new knowledge out of what's already in their heads." In other words, there has to be some match between the concept being presented and the conceptual readiness of the students.
4. Introduce the more detailed aspects of the subject matter. You can use lecture-discussion, demonstrations, audiovisuals, or whatever is appropriate. If possible, give the students clues about the relative importance of each point or piece of information. **Always reinforce the connection between the specifics and the organizing concept.**
5. Finish the lesson or session with some type of evaluation procedure or classroom assessment technique. It can be an informal discussion or a brief quiz. Some instructors like to have small groups solve problems with the material. You might have students write test questions. The nature of their questions will often reveal as much about students' thoughts and understanding as their answers to your questions would. Plus, you can use a few of them for later quizzes. Further readings or ways for students to apply the knowledge can be assigned for homework.

The cycle can then be repeated. **Be sure to follow up on any assignments the students have worked on before moving on to the next topic.**

Methods That Work

The decent docent doesn't doze—
He teaches standing on his toes
His student dassn't doze and does
and that's what teaching is and was.

—David McCord

What instructional methods work best? It's hard to answer that question in ten words or less. Most studies show that there is no one teaching method or single teaching style

that is best for all students or for accomplishing all objectives. Our experience suggests that students learn more from teachers who employ a variety of methods. In fact, two things that students like about our most effective instructors are their enthusiasm and their use of a wide variety of teaching methods. Listen to one student: "This class was great because we were always doing different things. We did small groups, videos, and in one class we acted out and resolved a conflict between a boss and her employee."

> *A great teacher ...has intensity and communicates it. That intensity is related directly to the confrontatory aspect of the classroom. It's rooted in our basic adrenal response to entering a classroom—to putting ourselves on the line before other selves as tenuous as our own—to performing.*
> —R. W. Hanning

The Lecture

When you have information to share with the students, lecturing can be an efficient way to do it. And most students, including adults, expect to be lectured to. A good lecture can do more than dispense information. It can demonstrate the logical reasoning and thinking patterns of the expert and it can generate student enthusiasm for the subject.

For the instructor, lecturing is not easy. A good lecture requires careful preparation, organization, and an attention-getting style of delivery. After all, this is the age of electronic media and you are competing with it.

One instructor, who lectures on occasion, compares them to spray painting. He says, "Lecturers use the spray paint theory of learning. They are the aerosol cans filled with knowledge and words. The students are unfinished furniture. So the lecturer sprays the room with words, seeing what seems to stick, applying a second coat in some cases, and thinks of improvement in terms of getting a better brand of paint."

In keeping with this metaphor, here are some general lecturing tips designed to help you get the maximum amount of coverage from the minimum amount of spraying.

1. **Keep it short.** During a lecture, students are in a relatively passive mode, so a half-hour is plenty long. If you lecture for 20 or 30 minutes straight, follow it with an activity that requires active student participation.
2. **Organize some of your lectures around problems** that are relevant to the students. According to McKeachie, this technique is more effective than some other approaches and allows the instructor to weave in examples and evidence in such a way that the students begin to see the solution forming even before it is explained.

3. **Introduce the lecture with a summary** (a type of advance organizer) and then wrap up the lecture with another summary that reviews not only the main points but also how the lecture accomplished its original purpose.
4. **Make the rules clear.** Tell students whether they can interrupt or whether they should wait until the end to ask questions. Also, discuss the main objectives for the lecture, how long it will take, and whether students need to take their own notes.
5. Some instructors **provide students with an outline** or a prepared set of lecture notes. This allows the students to listen without having to write at the same time.
6.
6. "Punctuate" your lectures with brief question and answer periods or have students write "one sentence summaries" (Classroom Assessment Technique) of what has been covered to that point.
7.
7. **Use visual aids** to spruce up your presentation. Overhead projections is effective but so are bloackboards and newsprint.

Some effective lecturers recommend that you **intermix brief lecture periods with small group discussion or problem-solving sessions around one of the points presented.** This keeps the class lively and energized, and allows the students to process the lecture information actively.

Discussion

Discussion sessions, like effective lectures, require preparation and organization. They are more than informal chats or bull sessions with the students. In fact, discussions can evolve into something beyond what you might have planned. A good instructor needs to be aware of what is being discussed and how it is being discussed. Content and process learning are happening simultaneously. Who is talking to whom? For how long? How often? Who is being analytical and who isn't? Are some students always looking to the instructor for answers? Like the right-fielder, a good discussion leader has to be a participant-observer, stepping back periodically to see what is going on.

> *Almost a half-century of research results indicate that the preferred method of teaching depends on one's goals. In studies that have measured problem-solving ability, attitudes, or motivation, the results favor the discussion method.*
>
> —Wilbert J. McKeachie

If you plan to use discussion sessions, and we hope you do, here are some reasons why discussion is such a useful technique.

1. Discussions can develop thinking skills. Participants have to think about the questions asked, about what people say, and about how they want to respond. Discussion makes students process the content in a way that they can then talk about it.
2. According to McKeachie, discussion exposes students to the logic and thinking patterns of others. Students are forced to evaluate the logic of and evidence for their own and other's positions. When students with different levels of cognitive ability interact with each other, growth and development are promoted.
3. Students get to see and make connections between new ideas and what they already know. They can figure out ways to apply principles or solve problems using concepts already learned.
4. Discussions can motivate students and provide a good setting for instructors to assess student progress.

Ideally, each discussion session should have its own objectives and these should be explained to students. Then, if the discussion gets too far off track, the instructor can bring it back by reminding students of those original purposes. The objectives may provide enough structure to free students from unproductive ambiguity about what the teacher is doing.

One of the most important considerations is to establish a climate of "psychological safety" in the group. Students must feel absolutely secure that they can contribute without being ridiculed. You should periodically remind students that all questions are good ones and that all responses are worthy of consideration.

The instructor can help the more reluctant, shy, or insecure students to participate by asking open-ended questions or soliciting their opinions rather than asking them for specific information or understanding. For example, you can ask, "Bill, what are your feelings on this matter?" or "Janet, can you share with us your opinion on this topic?" Students are the best reporters of their own feelings and even though they may not match those of others, they cannot be challenged as being inaccurate. On the other hand, avoid questions like "what is this an example of?" This puts the reluctant student on the spot.

Discussions can be started in a variety of ways. You can show a film clip, play an audio tape, or use last week's assignment. You can prepare a brief demonstration, present a mini-lecture, design a role-playing exercise, or make a controversial statement. You can ask open-ended questions like, "How might the reduction of the ozone layer in the atmosphere affect the lives of your children twenty years from now?" This is much more likely to stimulate discussion than questions like, "What is the definition of _____?"

Here are a few other tips for leading discussions:

- Arrange the seating so that people can make eye contact with each other. Paraphrase or comment on student remarks to acknowledge, reinforce, and clarify their ideas. Gradually, get students to respond to each other similarly. In fact, you can facilitate this in the early stages by directing student interaction: "Bill, Mary has outlined the major points in Skinner's theory. Can you think of any ways that her knowledge of behaviorism could be applied in real-life situations?"
- From time to time during the discussion, summarize the progress the group is making, restate the current topic, and point out any impediments to the progress of the discussion that you might have noticed.
- Ask infrequent contributors to comment when you are dealing in an area where you know they have something to offer. Get to know the reluctant ones and acknowledge that some people can participate without saying much. Give dominating students credit for their enthusiasm but gently remind them that discussions are designed to get everyone involved.
- Develop a tolerance for silence and explain to students that difficult questions or problems sometimes require periods of thought before a good response can be made.
- Prepare yourself by jotting down the questions you will use to start and direct the discussion. Be sure to plan both lower order questions designed to elicit specific information and higher order ones that get students to make connections, see parallels and contrasts, etc. **Remember, open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" response are better for stimulating discussion.**
- Let students know when they make a good point—"It was perceptive of you to notice that." Use eye contact and gestures to let students know you are paying close attention to what they are saying.
- Reserve judgment on "wrong answers." Try to get other students to provide alternative answers. Avoid "put-downs" at all costs.

Connected Classes

Most CCV classes are small, with fewer than 20 students. One advantage of the small classroom environment is that opportunities can be frequently created where students can interact over a particular topic or collaborate to solve a problem. Connected learning is based on the idea that people interpret information in new and creative ways and develop new insights by talking and thinking together in an atmosphere of free exchange. Connected learning, if properly nurtured, can be a synergetic process that allows the group to develop understanding beyond those of the individuals involved.

The instructor, like the "teacher as midwife" we referred to in a previous chapter, welcomes diversity of opinion as a valuable asset to the process and accepts all kinds of student feelings toward the subject and toward the instructor. The instructor encourages collaboration over debate. The point is to get students learning from each other and generating new knowledge together. While debate may be an appropriate technique under some circumstances, connected learning requires a noncompetitive process where the most silent and reticent students are encouraged to share their feelings and insights. The instructor's role is to model understanding and acceptance of all contributions to the group effort.

The Magic of Small Groups

Breaking the class into small groups is a remarkably versatile and effective instructional tool. Commonly referred to as "buzz groups" because of the "buzzing" that can be heard in the room when they are hard at work, this technique is great for getting everybody actively involved in the class. Some students who are quiet in the large group will be enthusiastic small-group participants. It is easier for shy or "silent" students to express their opinions in small groups because their contributions will be combined with other input and integrated into the group process. Many students feel more comfortable having their ideas represented by the group rather than having them reflect individually on their own personal abilities.

Small-group sessions are effective for brain-storming, problem-solving, or analysis tasks and they can be planned for appropriate points during a lesson. However, they can also be used to provide a context for the kind of "connected learning" described earlier. Some instructors even use them spontaneously when they sense the class bogging down and in need of a change. They are most effective, however, when you have prepared a question, task assignment, or problem situations for the students to deal with. Group membership can be randomly selected or carefully planned to provide a good mix of student styles and abilities. Buzz groups normally have 3-6 members and meet for about ten minutes. Each group picks a person to report back to the whole class. The instructor can circulate among the groups and even stop to share observations on occasion.

Observing the small group action is another important tool for assessing how much learning is occurring and for determining which students are having problems.

Some small-group discussion tips:

- Assign groups a variety of tasks. For example, different groups can be assigned to research different aspects of a single topic, or to take opposite sides of an issue. Groups can also be used for role-playing or simulation games.
- Experiment with assignments that play on the strengths of individual students. Less able members of a group can learn by observing how the "expert" handles an assigned task. Be sure to vary the types of tasks so that everyone gets a chance to shine.
- Use small group discussions as follow-ups to lectures and reading assignments. Put groups to work on projects and have them present their findings at the end of the period. If your class is small to begin with, you can use diads (a small group of two) in a similar way. The small-group shift toward more active learning can help keep the class alive as the hour grows late.

Role-Playing, and Other Experiential Methods

Sydney Duncombe is a professor of political science at the University of Idaho and he wears many hats. According to an article written by Duncombe and Michael Heikkinen (1988), if you visited one of Duncombe's classes you might find him wearing a red, white, and blue hat giving a rousing speech in favor of the American System, or you might find him wearing a beret while espousing the values of the French party system. For ten years, Duncombe has been role-playing different viewpoints in front of his classes because he found, to his amazement, that when he first tried it, students did much better on exam questions about the role-played topics than they did on most others.

While Duncombe does this role-playing himself, many other instructors get their students to play the roles. In a typical structured role-play, you set a scene that partially replicates an actual situation related to the content of the course. You ask students to assume parts and either follow a loosely defined script or to ad-lib based on short written descriptions of their roles.

We are always playing, but only the wise ones know it.
—Arthur Schnitzler

Some tips about role-playing:

- As with other methods, be sure to outline the purposes of the role-playing exercise. Role-plays are good for practicing skills, applying concepts, and developing problem-solving abilities.

- Don't be afraid to experiment—even "busts" can be fun and informative. Your class may gain from asking why certain roles were difficult to play.
- Give specific instructions to the non-player observers. Ask them to report their observations after the role-play.
- "I think we have reached a good stopping point" is an appropriate way for instructors to end the role-play session. 10-20 minutes is plenty long for a role-play to develop. It can get boring after that.
- "Paradoxical Intention" is an interesting technique. In this approach, you ask the player(s) to "do it the wrong way." For example, in a business course on supervision, you might ask a player to exhibit poor listening skills in a conflict management scene. After a time, the player could be asked to switch styles and exhibit some strong listening skills.
- Role reversal is a related technique where you ask participants to change roles to an opposite type of character and continue on with the scene. When students act out and experience differing points of view, they can broaden perspectives and develop a more objective stance on issues.
- Debriefing is a critical aspect of role-playing. Players should give a quick summary of how they felt and what they learned playing their roles. Observers can report their impressions. Ask people to integrate the results of the role-play with the material learned in class or from readings. Also, get feedback on how it went in general and whether the class would like to role-play other situations in the future.

Other experiential methods include simulations, field trips, laboratory work, interviewing, and survey research. These "hands-on" approaches to learning can enhance the teaching and learning of a new concept. They match the learning styles of many students, they energize and add variety to the instructional program, and they promote active student involvement in the learning process. Many instructors have found that using one of these methods to introduce a new concept provides a shared experience that can make subsequent discussions or other activities more relevant and meaningful.

Audiovisual Instructional Methods

Films, tapes, and slides are available in many subjects and, as we noted earlier, CCV staff members can help you to find them. Here are some general considerations for the use of these materials in the classroom.

- Order materials and reserve equipment well in advance. While the college has an excellent collection of video offerings, if you have to rent a tape or film, it normally takes up to four weeks' advance notice.

- Get familiar with the equipment before you have to use it. Avoid embarrassment (or even disaster) by testing the equipment and your skill at using it. Also review the materials to be sure that it's what you ordered.
- Provide students with plenty of background information before presenting audiovisual materials. The objectives for using them should be clear and the presentation can be followed with more discussion so that students can see the connection between the presentation and course readings, lectures, etc.

Etc., etc., etc.

The overarching principle that should guide your selection of instructional methods is that **diversity among students calls for variety in teaching techniques**. The following ideas can be used to enhance and supplement the strategies we've mentioned so far.

- Individualize activities, projects, and papers when necessary. Sometimes this is the only way to ensure that a certain student will learn a particular concept or skill. Students can report on research findings, describe the work of their small group, or demonstrate a skill.
- Combine techniques whenever possible: combine lectures with small group discussions and discussion periods with an experiential exercise. "Flip-flop" groups—get half the class to work on a writing assignment while the other half does research or a work-sheet exercise.
- Use brainstorming techniques to generate ideas and draw on students' creativity. Start off with a question like: "How many ways can you think of to use this skill in an office environment?" Remind them that there are no dumb or impossible ideas in brainstorming and that no criticisms are allowed. Then, break into small groups and have each group take the list and identify or expand on the most plausible or creative ideas.
- Case studies and critical incidents are commonly used in business courses but can also be constructed for almost any subject area. Case studies must be carefully prepared in great detail but the critical incident is a simpler variation. An event is described by the instructor and the students discuss it in light of what they have learned. Or, a critical incident can be used to introduce a topic. This approach sets the stage for the material that follows. Critical incidents must be plausible or students will find it difficult to react.
- "Melt-down." Within a single class session, group energy can sag. The 90-minute rule says that adults can only sit for about that long without needing to stretch, drink, smoke, or burp. Take breaks accordingly.

- The last 20 minutes can also get deadly even if you adhered to the 90-minute rule. You may feel the sag yourself. Plan ahead and jazz up that period—recap, highlight, give a quiz, plan and speculate on the next assignment, jog in place—something to give merit to staying awake. Don't forget the one-minute paper.
- At about the 7th or 8th week of a 15-week semester, enthusiasm for the whole enterprise may wane. It is a good time to do a role-play, get a film, take a field trip, invite a guest speaker, etc.

Assignments That Work

"But I thought that's what you wanted," is a common student refrain. "I would have done it but my daughter is sick and I spent the whole week taking care of her," is typical of another type of student plea for absolution for not completing homework.

> *Good assignments elicit good work; bad assignments, bad work.*
>
> —Kenneth E. Eble

While there are myriad reasons why some assignments like term papers are essentially risky, for the sake of brevity let's outline some of the factors that make assignments good.

First, a good assignment has a clear purpose that is directly related to accomplishing the course objectives. That purpose is explained to students. The assignment is typed, copied, and disseminated to students in time for the class to go over it and discuss it. When it is due, how long it should take, and what you will do with it in class are fully explained.

Students should also know the consequences of failing to complete assignments and you should explain how the work can be made up.

Here are a few other tips:

- **Vary your assignments**. One week students can read about a topic, the next week they can teach it to a spouse or friend and report the results. Ask different students to become experts on some aspect of the subject. They can interview authorities on a subject, do some library research, and then teach that topic to the whole class. Or, you can form small groups where individuals do the research on a problem and the group synthesizes it in the form of a report.
- **Make writing assignments short and interesting**. Let students choose from a list of questions that can be answered with brief essays or reaction papers. Use tests and quizzes as homework assignments. Students can look up the information they need

to answer questions that require comparing and contrasting, analysis, synthesis, and making or defending judgments.

- **If it's important to have them, give long assignments early in the term** and break the task into blocks: index card file, outline, rough draft, final draft. Be specific about expectations but allow the students some choice of topic. If they are not interested in the subject, they won't write interesting papers and you won't like reading them. If it's a term paper or research assignment, tell students about *Bibliotech*, CCV's excellent guide. Remind them that we have writing labs and that they have toll-free access to our librarian.

Testing and Measuring

> *The take-home style of exam has encouraged a more active learning than to memorize details and hope for the best during an in-class exam. The information is more apt to remain with me if I must ponder a question and utilize material in order to answer it.*
>
> —CCV Student

As noted earlier, assessment of learning has become a national priority. We previously discussed the value of planning several different ways to continually assess learning. Observation of performance, anecdotal record-keeping, product evaluation, presentations, projects, and group discussion are just some of the ways instructors can gather information to measure student progress. Testing, however, will remain a valuable, efficient, and popular method.

If you are teaching a skill-oriented subject like math, you may want to do some pretesting to see where students are and where you need to begin. In some cases, a student may need to be advised into a lower level course or you may need to reorganize the course to accommodate either lower or higher levels of ability.

Tests are most useful if they are used throughout the course. Frequent quizzes can help you keep your fingers on both the class's pulse and that of individual students. They also can increase the efficiency of student learning. In fact, research evidence supports the frequent use of quizzes. Well-constructed tests allow students to recall information, reinforce the learning, reorganize their thoughts, and even use higher-level thinking. Some would assert that frequent quizzing also helps to desensitize students who have test-taking anxiety.

The development of a good test begins with your objectives. And, it's a good idea to "weight" the test items toward the most critical objectives. Ask students, either in small groups or as homework assignments, to construct some test items. Formulating

questions is an excellent way for students to study the subject and the results will provide you with an extra supply of test items to select from.

Essay questions are effective in assessing the mastery of higher order objectives. Students can interpret material, generalize about it, and evaluate it through essay-type questions. Remember, while essay questions are easier to construct, they are more difficult and time-consuming to correct. However, the small size of most CCV classes makes using essay questions a much more viable alternative. Be sure to let students know what you will be looking for: good organization, depth of analysis, use of examples, etc. Here is a typical essay-type question. "Discuss what you consider to be the major differences between Freud's and Erik Erikson's theories of personality development."

Short-answer items are effective for moving students from straight recall and recognition skills to slightly higher levels of comprehension. Students can be asked to fill in blanks in a statement, complete a sentence, or to respond to a question in a sentence or two. Short-answer items can assess whether students are picking up the important details. Here is an example: "What event is credited by many historians with the start of the Revolutionary War?"

True/false items can measure the ability to recall or comprehend large amounts of information. Be careful to make the questions of similar length and to eliminate as much ambiguity as possible. They are easy to score but because students can get them correct by chance alone, their use should be limited.

Good multiple-choice questions are harder to develop than most other types. They can, however, measure different levels of learning from simple recall to much higher levels of comprehension. If you are going to teach your course on a continuing basis, you can develop, test, and revise a few each semester until you have a good selection. The stem statement should be brief, and it should not provide clues to the correct answer. The choices for answers (a four- or five-option approach is recommended) should be carefully selected to provide one that is clearly correct and several distractors that hold some promise as being correct answers. You should not include an "off-the-wall" distractor. It does nothing but embarrass the students who select it.

It is important to **reduce test-anxiety** by discussing your purposes and procedures with the class. Focus on the assessment value for the students and for you. One of our more experienced instructors does this by making specific written comments on each quiz. And, he requires all students to correct the items they missed.

Discuss the quiz when you return it to students. Discussion provides feedback and reinforcement of learning. Do not embarrass an individual by discussing his or her wrong answers ... unless, of course, the student raises the issue.

Consider giving **take-home quizzes**. They do not take up valuable class time and they allow students an extended period of time to think about their answers. Of course, take-homes should solicit conceptual understanding of the material; the text and other

references can be used to gather evidence to back up assertions. Don't ask questions that can be answered directly with factual information that can be taken from the text.

A Miscellany of Topics for Teachers

Addressing the Needs of All Students

Discipline problems are, indeed, rare at CCV. Adult students are in class to learn, not to goof off. Problem students and students with problems are not unknown, however. Your class will probably have one or two students who will dominate discussions. These are the talkative students who, if not kept in check, can interfere with the progress of the class.

Diagnose each case of prolixity before taking any direct action. Is the talkativeness a problem to you? To other students? See if it subsides after a session or two. Watch for the reactions of the other students. Do they scowl or roll their eyes?

We have found that some verbose students are trying to impress the instructor and themselves. Their initial remarks may be quite perceptive and raise your expectations. "Here is a real superstar," you may think. You may be amazed and disappointed when you discover his/her poor performance on the first quiz. The failure to deliver when put to the test may eventually cause the talkers to lose interest; they often start missing classes, talking less in them, or redirecting their energies elsewhere. According to Joseph Lowman (1984), these students have high ideals for themselves that they are unable to reach. In fact, their innermost fear may be that they won't be able to live up to their own expectations.

Lowman points out that these high-promisers/weak-deliverers usually turn out to be quite capable students. Instructors can sometimes bring out their talents by helping them to channel their efforts toward learning the basics of the subject and by giving them a lot of credit for doing so. Expect good things from them but show them that learning comes gradually, step by step.

Other dominating talkers may be more like the standard attention-seeking students. Their love for discussion and talking is predominantly social rather than intellectual. Instructors who have worked successfully with these students give them plenty of attention early in the course and then gradually reduce it and refocus it on academic achievement.

> *If you have the chutzpah and the matter is loosely related to the course, stop and talk about listening, talking, and group dynamics. Listening is an academic skill, so it may be the educationally right thing to confront a student with his/her behavioral impact.*
>
> —Ken Kalb

Check with the student's advisor to see if this behavior has been a problem in other classes. If the problem persists and is disruptive to the class dynamics, call the talkative student aside during break or after class and explain the situation. "I appreciate your enthusiasm but others need a chance too." Use small groups to supplement whole class discussions and to dilute and spread the talkativeness. Don't hesitate to redirect the discussion to other students. "Bill, what do you think about Lisa's ideas?"

It is always appropriate to notify a coordinator whenever any student's language or behavior interferes with the teaching-learning process.

Quiet Students

Some are naturally shy but competent. Others are shy because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. For a few, their style is to participate through listening and observing. Diagnose each case; such students' written work will often provide valuable clues.

Whatever their reason for silence, quiet students can usually benefit from some increased verbal participation. One student recently reported in her end-of-course evaluation, "Learning to speak up was the most important thing I gained in this course. I now feel much more confident that I have something worthwhile to say."

Once you have established a feeling of basic trust in class, go ahead and call on these reluctant participators. At first, ask for opinions, not for specific information. Don't overdo it, but show appreciation for any response. On the other hand, respect their right to be silent. As one instructor noted, "Some students can be alert and brainy and doing well, yet quiet in class. Praise be! There's a world shortage of good listeners."

Student Diversity

Individual differences are a fact of life. We have already talked about how adults differ in goals, learning styles, and levels of development. They also will differ in ability and in previous academic achievement. While diversity can add spice to your class, it can also create problems.

How do you teach to all those different levels at once? You can't. But different learners can address the content at different levels and still meet the course objectives. "Phillip has told us some of the reasons why the rural-urban fringe is the fastest growing area in the U.S. Joan, can you explain how this might affect farming in those areas?" Here an instructor is asking Phillip to recall specific information and then asking Joan to combine it with other knowledge and hypothesize about it. This instructor knew what Phillip could handle and that Joan was ready to deal with the material at a more abstract level. The trick is to find students' ability levels and aim your instruction at or just above them. And, while low-achieving students are the most problematic, there is great satisfaction when they make gains.

Peer teaching in the form of diads or small groups can also be effective in accommodating individual differences. As different levels of ability interact, both seem to benefit. The more advanced students become models for the others and, at the same time, they can enhance their own learning through the process of teaching and explaining their ideas.

Assignments can be designed that allow students to work at their own level. For example, one instructor asks students to write short reaction papers to each reading assignment.

Joan might select an issue or idea and argue for or against it, using evidence to back up her position. Phillip, on the other hand, might summarize the facts or major points presented in the reading. Another instructor requires students to develop three questions about each homework assignment. The type of questions the students ask vary according to each individual's readiness to deal with the material either concretely or abstractly. This question-developing technique teaches the students a valuable study skill while allowing them to respond to the material at their own levels.

Still another instructor prepares several questions that range in level of difficulty and degree of abstraction required to answer them. Her assignments allow students to choose three out of five or four out of seven options. Students tend to select the questions that are most congruent with their readiness to answer them.

Serious Student Learning Problems

These often show up in students' writing. Instructors frequently tell us that the first writing samples they collect often provide clear evidence of how greatly students differ in ability.

If specific prior learning or good writing skills are critical to success in your class, and some students appear to be handicapped because they lack these prerequisites, let your CCV coordinator know immediately. The college can provide assistance or, in some cases, help students to make alternative course selections.

You can help low-achievers by individualizing their assignments, by providing lots of encouragement, and by guiding their early efforts carefully. Again, take advantage of any peer teaching opportunities through small groups and diads. Focus on their gains but let them know if they are not accomplishing the objectives. Remember, early successes can motivate and some students will make significant strides once they gain a little confidence.

There is a distinction between learning problems and learning disabilities. Students who consistently reverse letters, eliminate word endings, or are unable to read aloud, may have a neurologically based disability. When you detect a considerable gap between a student's verbal and written communication skills, it may indicate a disability. Students

with learning disabilities may also try to avoid written communication altogether, and they can be quite clever at doing it.

Some students without neurologically based disabilities may behave similarly. Unsuccessful early school experiences can have almost the same effect. When in doubt, check it out. It is very important to notify the Coordinator of Student Support Services at your site.

The Interpersonal Element

> *For (some) students the most powerful teaching often occurs through the (teacher-student) relationship itself rather than through our explicitly didactic efforts in the classroom.*
>
> —Laurent Daloz

Your job, as an instructor, is to help students learn your subject and develop their skills and abilities. However, students sometimes learn as much from how we relate to them as they will do from what we try to teach them. In his book, *Effective Teaching and Mentoring*, Daloz shows us by some compelling examples that powerful and lasting learning can occur through the conversations and relationships that develop between instructor and student.

Here are two skills that teachers can develop to influence the interpersonal dimension in their classes:

Active Listening: When teachers speak, students listen, but it is just as important for instructors to listen to students. Isn't that just stating the obvious? Well, there is listening and then there is **active** listening. Active listening can help make the student **feel** listened to and important. And, when that happens, the student usually becomes more motivated to learn.

Active listening starts by attending to the learner. This means physically posturing yourself to listen: leaning forward and making eye contact. Observe the student for physical clues about emotions, energy levels, motivations, etc.

Responding is the key, however, to the whole active listening process. A response technique that is especially effective for teachers is paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is a way to "connect" with the learner.

"Beth, I hear you saying that every time you get rolling on studying, something happens at home to interrupt. It also seems that you get frustrated and annoyed that you can't keep up with the assignments." In this case the instructor is using paraphrasing to reflect back to the student her understanding of the student's concern. Regardless of the accuracy of the instructor's interpretation, it shows a deep interest in the student's comment and a strong attempt to understand it— powerful medicine for the student who needs to feel important and listened to. It also gives the student a chance to clarify and

expand on the original comment if the paraphrase was off the mark. "That isn't quite what I meant, but ....."

Paraphrasing also helps instructors to confirm their understanding of student comments and questions before giving advice, providing an answer, or asking other students to comment. Nothing falls quite as flat as a response based on a misunderstood statement. As you improve your active listening skills, your paraphrasing will address the content, the attendant feelings, and the meaning of student remarks when appropriate. In the example above, the content had to do with the interruptions; the feelings of frustration were noted, and the student's inability to keep up was the reason for the frustration. This type of paraphrasing can put you in tune with the students and make all subsequent communication more effective.

Reinforcement and Encouragement: B.F. Skinner and a host of other behaviorists have taught us that reinforced behavior tends to persist and increase; behavior that is not reinforced will eventually stop. One way to reinforce a desired behavior is through praise. "Janet, that was a good job." In this case, the praise will be effective if Janet agrees that it indeed was a good job.

Encouragement is a variation on praise as a form of reinforcement. It focuses on a particular aspect of a student's performance with more specificity. "Janet, in your paper I noticed that you support your argument with a wealth of information taken from a variety of sources." This approach appears to have great potential to nourish the student's feelings of accomplishment and worth. Encouragement is a technique developed by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs and was originally intended to help parents and teachers build the self-concepts of young children. We now know it can work with adults as well.

In using encouragement, the instructor must watch for good work, determine what makes it good, and let the student know about it either through an oral or written comment. **The specificity gives encouragement its power** because it indicates that the instructor has carefully noted the student's performance and is genuinely impressed. If a student is struggling, encouragement can be based on effort. "I noticed, Mike, that you put a lot of time, effort, and thought into that paper. I can already see improvement in grammar and organization."

Equity Issues in the Classroom

CCV was founded on the idea of providing equal access to a higher education for everyone. In that spirit we are also concerned that equal access to the learning process is carried over into the classroom environment. And, while the college is certainly a unique organization with a strong sense of community, we also realize that we are not immune to some of the inequities that exist in society and in particular to those that exist in higher education environments.

Reports of sexual harassment, unprofessional conduct between teachers and students, peer harassment, racial, ethnic, and religious prejudices, socioeconomic class

discrimination and both outright and more subtle examples of gender inequity are ubiquitous in college settings. We feel, therefore, that it is appropriate to raise everyone's consciousness about these issues so that we may become more sensitive to them and less apt to ignore them or engage in them ourselves.

Here are a few examples of inappropriate behaviors that have been reported in college settings.

- Engaging in any kind of reprisal after an individual has refused to respond to social or sexual advances.
- Continuing to ask a student or co-worker to socialize when she/he has indicated no interest in such activity.
- Touching students or co-workers in ways that have sexual implications or any kind of touching that is not acceptable to the person involved.
- Inadvertently or purposefully excluding members of one sex from classroom discussion activities.
- Using images, humor, language, or examples that demean or degrade on the basis of sex, race, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or age.

It is also important to be aware that many audio-visual and printed materials contain sexist language, comments, illustrations, and other elements that reflect a biased approach to the subject matter. For example, some texts completely ignore the contributions that women have made to the discipline involved. Preview materials carefully and try to select those that do not contain the kinds of inequities noted above.

If you observe behaviors that reflect a discriminatory attitude toward anyone, the college has trained staff in each site to deal with such matters. Don't hesitate to contact your local coordinator. Also, for more information on this subject please refer to Instructor Bulletin 12: Avoiding Sexism in the Classroom.

The Ending: Wrapping It Up in Style

Like the first class session, the last sessions have high emotional content. Students are concerned about final exams, papers, grades, and the inevitable separation from the course and the personal relationships involved. The instructor may be worried that all of the content won't be covered. According to Lowman (1984) and Eble (1976), the emotional needs during the last class meetings are so important that they must take precedent over the course content.

To take care of content, emotional, and administrative needs, we recommend that you use the last sessions to bring the class slowly to closure. This is a good time to review the course objectives and discuss how well the class did on them. Ask students to reflect

on what they learned, how they learned it, what they would like to improve on in the remaining time, and how they will use what they learned in the future. One instructor uses unfinished sentences such as:

In this course I learned .....

I wish I had learned .....

The most useful thing I learned was .....

In general, this course has been .....

Students can write their answers or you can lead a brainstorming session and put all of the responses on newsprint or on the blackboard. Students can always choose not to share their responses. Here are a few pointers for making the last few classes successful:

- If you use a final exam, give it during the next to last class and use the final class to review it. Spread the presentation of final projects over the last few classes and leave plenty of time for feedback.
- Discuss the narrative evaluations early in the course and again in the last few sessions. Use open-ended questions like those above to help prepare students and to inform your own student assessment efforts. Students should write their narratives in the next to last class or do them as a homework assignment.
- The group may want to end the course with a potluck dinner, a small party, or some other type of celebration. Check with the CCV office to see if there are restrictions in terms of the space you are using. Avoid alcoholic beverages. If there are costs involved, be sure that they are affordable for **everyone**. Leave time for students to complete their assessment of instruction and any other administrative matters needed to close out the course.

Writing Evaluations

After the course, you will be preparing narrative evaluations of each student. Hopefully, you have been assessing student progress along the way to make the task more valid and much easier. Final narrative evaluations provide a record of the student's work and for degree students they are a critical piece of documentation for their plans. Narratives should **describe** what students learned in terms of the objectives, and the description should support the final letter grade (S or N). Any traditional letter grades you agree to give should also be closely in tune with the narratives and with the criteria you established early in the course.

When writing your narratives, we recommend that you use the course objectives as a guide and respond to questions like the following:

1. How well did the student meet each stated objective? What did the student do to demonstrate that the objectives were met?
2. To what extent did the student participate in class activities and how did this involvement affect the student's performance on the objectives? How did she/he perform on tests and homework assignments?
3. Did the student do a project, presentation, or complete any extra work? If so, how did it contribute to the student's learning? Did the student learn anything that wasn't spelled out in the course objectives?
4. Can you suggest ways for the student to improve his/her performance in the future?

Try to be as specific as possible. Avoid generalizations and don't judge the student's personal attributes. For example, rather than calling a student "industrious," describe her special effort to gather original source materials for her research project. By all means don't characterize a student as "lazy" or "irresponsible," but do note that she/he failed to complete several assignments on time. **Describe, don't label.**

A Few Afterthoughts

We have found that excellent instructors come in all varieties. There is no stereotypical great instructor. However, some characteristics are common among the most successful instructors. For one thing, they have a solid grasp of their subject and can present it in a clear, simple, and intelligent manner.

Another quality present in most good instructors is enthusiasm for the subject. Some even have a dramatic flair, but this does not seem to be necessary. When enthusiasm is combined with a real sensitivity to student needs and a genuine concern for their development, you have a winning combination.

Persistent effort can compensate for most any deficiencies that might have led to initially poor or moderate instructor performance. The idea that good teachers are born with special talents is probably a partial truth at best.

Are there stages of instructor development? Listen to what one teacher says, "As I think back to my first (teaching) experience, I was pretty uptight about my own ability. I was very self-conscious. I also wanted to be sure that I taught everything that was in the book. To say my initial approach was didactic would be an understatement. I felt responsible for everything that happened; the burden was solely on me. I learned two important things as I gained more experience. One was to relax, be myself, and enjoy the students. The other was to realize that students are partners in the (teaching-learning) process and that my most important job was to draw students out and be a resource for them."

With that thought in mind, we hope you have a productive and rewarding experience teaching at CCV. And, if this handbook helps—even in the smallest way—to make that possible, we will be truly pleased.

REFERENCES

Arons, Arnold B. 1979. "Some Thoughts on Reasoning Capacities Implicitly Expected of College Students." In J. Lockhead and J. Clement, Eds. *Cognitive Process Instruction*, Philadelphia: The Franklin Institute Press.

Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N. and Tarule, J. 1986. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic Books.

Cross, K. Patricia. 1988. Teaching Goals Inventory, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Cross, K. Patricia and Angelo, Thomas A. 1988. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for Faculty*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.

Daloz, Laurent. 1986. *Effective Teaching and Mentoring*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Duncombe, Sydney and Heikkinen, Michael H. 1988. "Role Playing for Different Viewpoints." In *College Teaching*, 36, 3-5.

Eble, Kenneth E. 1977. *The Craft of Teaching: A Guide to Mastering the Professor's Art*, San Francisco: Jossey- Bass, Inc.

Gilligan, Carol. 1981. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Guild, P. B. and Garger, S. 1985. *Marching to Different Drummers*, ASCD Publications.

Johnson, Glenn R. 1988. *Taking Teaching Seriously: A Faculty Handbook*, College Station: Texas A&M University Center for Teaching Excellence.

Kloss, Robert J. 1987. "Coaching and Playing Right Field." In *College Teaching*, 35, 134-139.

Kolb, David and Fry B. 1975. "Toward an Applied Theory of Experiential Learning." In C. Cooper (Ed.) *Theories of Group Processes*. New York: Wiley.

Kurfiss, Joanne. 1981. "Formal Task/Concrete Learner," unpublished paper, Weber State College.

Lowman, Joseph. 1984. *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

McKeachie, W.J. 1978. *Teaching Tips: a Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher*, Lexington, Ma.: D.C. Heath and Co.

Pearson, Carol S. 1986. *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*, San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Perry, William G. Jr. 1970. *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Scheckley, B. G. 1984. The Adult as Learner: A Case for making higher education more responsive to the individual learner. *CAEL News*, 7 (8), 8 (1).

Sheehy, Gail. 1976. *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life*. New York: Dutton.

Steitz, J. A. 1985. Issues of Adult Development Within the Academic Environment. *Lifelong Learning*, 8 (6), 15-18, 27.

Surry, J. L. 1991. "The Self-in-Relation: A Theory of Women's Development" in *Women's Growth In Connection, Writings From the Stone Center*. New York: The Guilford Press.

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges
MAR 20 1992